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FAREWELL COUNSELS OF A
PASTOR TO HIS FLOCK

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FAREWELL COUNSELS OF A
PASTOR TO HIS FLOCK

Nine Sermons,

PREACHED AT ST. JOHN'S, PADDINGTON,

before quitting that sphere of Ministerial Labour

BY EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D.

DEAN OF NORWICH.

RIVINGTONS

London, Oxford, and Cambridge

POTT AND AMERY

5 AND 13, COOPER UNION, FOURTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

1867

[*Second Edition*]

~~25/2~~
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YOUNG
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TO

MR. AND MRS. WILLIAM GIBBS,

AND, GENERALLY,

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION

OF ST. JOHN'S, PADDINGTON,

THESE FEW WORDS

OF PARTING COUNSEL, AND OF GUIDANCE ON SOME

GRAVE QUESTIONS OF THE DAY,

ARE OFFERED,

WITH WARM GRATITUDE AND AFFECTION,

BY THEIR LATE PASTOR

AND CONSTANT FRIEND.





TABLE OF CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

Absolution.

MATTHEW ix. 2—7.

PAGE

“And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house”

I

SERMON II.

Ritualism.

I.

REVELATION viii. 3, 4.

PAGE

“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand” 27

SERMON III.

Ritualism.

II.

I JOHN ii. 16.

“The lust of the eyes is not of the Father, but is of the world” 43

SERMON IV.

The Doctrine of the Eucharist.

JOHN vi. 53.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you” 67

SERMON V.

The Atonement.

ROMANS iii. 24, 25.

PAGE

“ Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood ” . 89

SERMON VI.

The Stability of an Orthodox Faith.

COLOSSIANS ii. 7.

“ Stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught ” 112

SERMON VII.

The Stability of Personal Religion.

EPHESIANS iv. 11—15.

“ And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning

	PAGE
<i>craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ</i> "	135

SERMON VIII.

On Preaching Christ Crucified.

I CORINTHIANS ii. 2.

<i>"I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"</i>	155
---	-----

SERMON IX.

The Responsibility of Hearers.

LUKE viii. 18.

<i>"Take heed therefore how ye hear"</i>	176
--	-----





SERMON I.

Absolution.

“And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.”—MATT. ix. 2—7.

THE subject of Ministerial Absolution has been recently brought under the notice of the public; and all sorts of theories have been hazarded upon it, some maintaining too absolutely the existence of

this power, without giving due prominence to the safeguards and qualifications with which our Church has fenced it round ; while others have virtually denied the power altogether, or at least have evacuated of all their force the words which confer it. So wide a divergence of opinion on a point of very high importance has a tendency to confuse the minds of simple and humble Church people, and to lead them to ask in despair, as each successive manifesto on the subject seems to have something to say in its own favour, "What *am* I to think?" I do not know that I can more usefully employ the few opportunities of addressing you, which still remain to me, than by seeking to guide your minds on subjects, which in our day agitate and divide religious opinion ; and as this is the day¹, on which a large number of young men throughout the country are admitted to the Order of Priesthood, and solemnly entrusted with the absolving power, the subject of Ministerial Absolution will be appropriate to the season. In treating it, I shall seek no

¹ This Sermon was preached on the December Ordination Sunday of 1866.

other guidance but that of the Holy Scriptures, interpreted for us Churchmen by the Book of Common Prayer.

I. The original ground of the power of Absolution, as ministered by men upon earth, is, it appears to me, to be sought in the passage before us. Our Lord, previously to healing the paralytic, had pronounced Absolution upon him,—nothing more and nothing less,—“Son,” He had said to him, “thy sins be” (that is, for such is the force of the tense in the original, “they have been and are”) “forgiven thee.” In the Old Testament, Nathan, the prophet, on a memorable occasion, had made a precisely equivalent announcement to the penitent David. “And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.” It is observable that neither the *merely* human prophet under the Old Dispensation, nor the *Divine*-human Prophet under the New Dispensation, say, “I forgive thee;” nor do any such words occur in the formularies of the Book of Common Prayer. The words, “By Christ’s authority committed to me, I *absolve* thee from

all thy sins," are indeed found in our Office for the Visitation of the Sick ; but this is by no means equivalent to "I forgive thee." To forgive is one thing ; to absolve is another. To *forgive* sins is the part and inalienable prerogative of God, against whom, as the great legislator and judge of the conscience, all sin is committed. To *absolve* is to dispense and convey forgiveness to those who have the right dispositions of heart for receiving it ; and this is the part of God's messengers and representatives, whether under the Old or New Dispensations. It is necessary to draw this distinction, in order to the clear apprehension of our subject. But at the same time it is to be observed that, according to the idiom of Holy Scripture, in which things are said to be done by God's messengers, which are only announced by them under His commission and authority, "to forgive sins" does sometimes mean to declare and convey forgiveness of them, or in other words to absolve. One striking instance of this idiom will suffice. "See," says God to the Prophet Jeremiah, "I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to

build, and to plant." Nothing can be plainer than that it is the Divine Power and Providence, independently of any human agency, which overturns one kingdom and nation, and sets up and establishes another. But inasmuch as what God says by the mouth of His holy prophets must infallibly come to pass, the prophet who predicts by inspiration the fall of one empire and the rise of another, and by the prediction secures the event, is said *himself* to pull down and destroy the one empire, and to build and plant the other. The same idiom is employed in the New Testament, when those who declare and convey forgiveness of sins, under a Divine commission, are said *themselves* to forgive sins ; (as in the passage, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.")

The Jewish scribes, from their acquaintance both with the Scriptural idiom, and with the story of Nathan's absolving David, ought not, on the occasion before us, to have misunderstood Our Lord's words. But they showed the same *animus* in this instance, which actuated them all along, a determination to misunderstand and misinterpret. So they "reasoned in their hearts" (as St. Mark's

version of the story hath it), "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" Our Lord in fact had never claimed the power of forgiving sins, otherwise than ministerially by an effective assurance of God's having forgiven them. He had not said, "Son, I forgive thee;" but "Son, thy sins are forgiven." And He proceeds to maintain His claim to give this assurance in the most convincing possible way. "You may question My pretensions," He says, "when I claim a certain power in the invisible world, My possession of which you cannot disprove; but what if, coincidently with these pretensions, I claim also a power in the *natural* world, My possession of which you can disprove in a moment by the exercise of your senses?" "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the *Son of Man* hath power *on earth* to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

Now observe this language narrowly; "That ye may know that the *Son of Man* hath power *on earth* to forgive sins."

He is not *claiming* to forgive sins as the Son of *God*, or in the same manner as God in Heaven forgives them. To have done even this would not in *His* case have been blasphemy, would not have been snatching at a prerogative to which He had no right; for indeed He was "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God." But it was part of the mystery of Christ's humiliation to empty Himself of the powers and prerogatives of the Godhead, and to hold them in abeyance, so long as He was in the flesh. So He here puts Himself forward simply as the Son of Man upon earth, in contradistinction to God Almighty in Heaven. And His position is, that He, as Son of *Man*, the great Covenant Head and Representative of the human race, hath authority, while on earth, to dispense and convey God's pardons, to open the treasure-house of God's mercy to those whom He sees, by His searching intuition, to be fit recipients of it. And it appears from the finishing touch in St. Matthew's narrative, that the people understood His claim. "When the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power" (literally, such authority) "unto *men*." The authority I take to be

the absolving authority², of which our Lord had spoken just before; "that ye may know that the Son of Man hath *authority upon earth* to forgive sins." They acknowledged (being constrained to do so by the miracle, which had established his claim to it) that this authority was now deposited among men upon earth—given to Christ, by God the Father, for the behoof and benefit of the whole human race, of which He is the Head.

II. We now proceed to a further stage in the consideration of the subject. We have seen that while upon earth, His glory veiled from mortal eye by a body of humiliation; Our Lord, in His human nature, claimed the power of dispensing and conveying God's forgiveness. Did He make any mention of this same power, when He was no longer

² The *ἐξουσία* in the eighth verse ("they glorified God, which had given such *power* unto men") must be the same as the *ἐξουσία* of the sixth verse ("that ye may know that the Son of Man hath *power* on earth to forgive sins"); that is, it must be the spiritual authority to absolve, not the physical power of working miracles, which is expressed by *δύναμις*, and rendered in our translation "virtue;" "There went *virtue* out of Him, and healed them all."—Luke vi. 19. Mark v. 30.

“upon earth,” when He had put off the natural and put on the spiritual body? Yes: the mention of this power, and the delegation of it to the Apostles, to exercise it in His Name, as He had exercised it in the Father’s, is one of the first words which fell from His lips after the Resurrection. On the first Easter Day, at evening, He came to His Apostles through closed doors, and having shown them His pierced hands and side, whereby remission had been meritoriously procured, He greeted them thus; “Peace be unto you: As My Father hath sent Me” (sent Me to herald and dispense forgiveness of sins), “even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

By these solemn words Absolution may be said to have been instituted, as an independent Ordinance³ of the Christian Church.

³ “This remission of sins granted here to the priest; to which God hath promised a confirmation in Heaven, is *not the act of preaching, or baptizing, or admitting men to the Holy Communion.* For this power of remitting sins, mentioned John. xx., was not granted

Those great forty days which elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, seem generally to have been a time of Institutions. Our Lord, when He met His Apostles during those forty days, and "spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," was engaged in tracing the outline of the foundations of His Church. It was during this time, we know, that the Apostles were commissioned to preach the Gospel to all nations, and so the foundation was laid of Christian Missions; that the Holy Sacrament

(though promised Matt. xvi. 19) till *now*, that is, after the Resurrection, as appears by the ceremony of *breathing*, signifying that then it was given: and secondly, by the word *Receive*, used in that place (v. 22), which He could not have properly used, if they had been endued with this power before. Therefore the power of remitting, which here God authorizes, and promises certain assistance to, is *neither preaching nor baptizing*, but some other way of remitting, viz. that which the Church calls *Absolution*."—*Sparrow*, as quoted in Hook's "Church Dictionary," Article *Absolution*.

I believe Absolution to be the *fundamental power* of the Christian Ministry, granted at the earliest Post-Resurrection interview of Our Lord with the Eleven; and that it pervades with its sweet fragrance the entire Ministry, both that of the Word, and that of the Sacraments, and that of Discipline.

of Baptism was formally instituted ; and doubtless the other Sacrament (though of this we have no express notice) re-enforced ; that the instruction of Christians in all things whatsoever Christ had commanded them (or, in other words, Preaching) was made a standing Ordinance of the Church. But the fundamental power, on which all these Institutions rested, was the remission of sins, purchased for man by Christ's Blood, and deposited on the first Easter Day with the inspired official representatives of the Christian Church. This fundamental power was therefore communicated in the first interview of our Lord with the Eleven.

III. But it may be asked ; "Even granting that *the Apostles* had this power, does it appear that there was any entail of it to those who should succeed them in the government of the Church ?" And here I make my appeal to the Book of Common Prayer. I am not reasoning with Dissenters, but with Churchmen ; and with Churchmen, if they are what they profess to be, the verdict of the Book of Common Prayer must be conclusive. The profession of Churchmanship, if it mean any thing, cannot mean less than this, that he who

makes it, accepts the Prayer Book as his commentary and interpretation of the Bible. Now the Book of Common Prayer directs the identical words, in which Our Lord delegated to His Apostles the power of Absolution, to be repeated separately to each man who is ordained priest. And further it provides for the periodical exercise of the power so conferred. It is to be exercised publicly every morning and evening, immediately after the general Confession. It is to be exercised publicly in a more solemn way after the deep-toned confession in the office of the Holy Communion. It may be exercised privately on certain occasions (to be further adverted to presently), though never as a rule, but as an exception. And one can see that the making private absolutions exceptional is a most wise and judicious arrangement. Our Blessed Lord, who had a perfect insight into the human heart, might say to an individual, without misleading him, or giving him false hopes, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." An inspired prophet, assured by inspiration of the perfect sincerity of the soul with which he was dealing, might do the same. But a modern minister, enjoying only the ordinary

assurances of God's Spirit, would risk doing an injury to souls by frequently ministering Absolution in private. Being unable to read the heart, his absolution might lull the conscience of an impenitent and unbelieving soul into security, might whisper peace to such a soul, when there was no peace. Wisely, therefore, and reasonably, our Church shows herself very chary of *private* Absolutions, while public Absolutions, on the other hand, she distributes with large liberality to all who come under the qualifying terms for them—Repentance and Faith.

And is it not a most blessed and comfortable thing that she does so? that, as often as Morning and Evening Prayer are said, the absolving word, spoken by Christ's ambassador in His Name, is allowed to fall like refreshing dew or healing balm upon the heart of every true penitent who attends the Service? Some indeed have alleged that the absolving power entrusted by Our Lord to His Apostles was connected with, and closely related to, the power of working miracles, with which He also endowed them; and that when this latter power expired in the Church, the entail of the absolving authority was at

the same time cut off. But how can such a view be made to look plausible either by Reason or Scripture? Christ gave to His Apostles the authority to baptize, to preach and teach, to celebrate the Eucharist,—in a word, to perform all the ordinary functions of the Christian Ministry, including among those functions the reproduction of the Ministry itself by Ordination. Does any one hold that these various authorities have not descended by entail to the Christian Church of the present day,—that the modern Church no longer holds the Apostolic commission to preach, to baptize, to ordain, to consecrate the Eucharist? And if it is beyond a doubt that she still holds these commissions, why not also the authority to absolve? There is a good reason to be alleged for the expiration of *miraculous* power in the Church. Miracles were the authorization of a Divine message, on its first being issued, which, now that the message is generally accepted, and has found for itself a footing in the earth, is no longer needed. But who will say that the conveyance to penitent souls of God's forgiveness is no longer needed? Are sins less plentiful, are consciences less burdened, think you, in

modern London or Paris than they were in ancient Jerusalem or ancient Rome?—Or, to glance at another point in the argument, in the grant of the power of Absolution made by Our Lord to the Apostles, is there the remotest reference to their power of working miracles, from which we might infer that the two were at all associated together or mutually interdependent? In our text, indeed, Christ worked a brilliant miracle by way of establishing His own claim to absolve from sin. That, and hundreds of other works of wonder which He did, have fully established His claim, and placed it beyond all reasonable doubt. In the passage of St. John's Gospel already quoted, we find that the power, His own possession of which He had so abundantly vindicated, was delegated by Him to His Apostles, and that they were solemnly constituted His representatives in the matter, as He, while on earth, had been God the Father's.

IV. In what has just been said, I have placed Absolution side by side with those other means of Grace in the Christian Church, among which it holds a place. If we give it in our minds this its true position, the popular and superficial objections against it will in-

stantaneously vanish. "It is quite inconceivable," says one, "that a fallible man should be entrusted with an office so awfully responsible as the conveyance and dispensation of God's treasury of pardon!" But why inconceivable? Is there any thing incredible in a fallible man's being entrusted with the awfully responsible office of announcing God's Word, and administering God's Sacraments? Is not the Sacrament of Baptism "for the remission of sins;" and does not the administration of it therefore involve an Absolution? Does not the minister who baptizes, convey to an *infant* remission of *original* sin by that act, and remission of sin, both *original* and *actual*, to the penitent and believing adult? If it is credible, and admitted on all hands, that he has the power to do that, why should he not have the power to absolve? The power of preaching the Gospel, too, is an awful trust to devolve upon sinful flesh and blood. I may, if entrusted with this power, misrepresent the Gospel to the people, and thereby mislead and even ruin their souls. I may put this power of preaching up to sale, by seeking and exercising the office of a preacher for filthy lucre's sake, and not out of

love of souls or regard for God's glory,—very little less criminal, if I do so, than the priest who in the dark ages demanded money before he would give his absolution. Yet the great facility with which the power of preaching the Gospel may be abused, does not throw any doubt upon the fact that Christian Ministers have indeed received a Divine Commission to preach the Gospel. Why should the liability to abuse of the power of Absolution lead us to suspect that no such power exists?

“But,” says another, “do you really mean to say that a priest can absolve, independently of the spiritual state of the person seeking absolution?” No, indeed, Brethren: that is a view, for which no doubt the adversaries of the Church may maliciously give her credit, but which she disclaims with an explicitness which I may call elaborate. How run her absolving formularies? “He pardoneth and absolveth all them *that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel;*” “Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who of His great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with *heartly repentance and true faith turn unto*

Him ;” “ Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners *who truly repent and believe in Him*, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences.” Here again there is a close analogy between Absolution and the Sacraments. An impenitent and unbelieving man resorting to either of the Sacraments, receives absolutely nothing from them, neither pardon, nor grace, nor light, nor strength. Without the personal qualifications, all the Sacraments in the world cannot bring him one whit nearer to God. It is not that the fountains of God’s Grace are not freely unlocked to us in the Sacraments, but that by impenitence and unbelief we place an obstacle in the way of their salutary efficacy ; the sunlight is shining upon us and around us, but we shut our doors and window-shutters, and block out its blessed golden beam. And so it is with the word of Absolution. It avails none but the penitent and believing ; and since no priest who ministers it can read the heart, it is impossible for him to say whether in any given case his absolution has taken effect. It is equally impossible for him to say whether a particular member of his flock has indeed received at his hands

the Body and Blood of Christ, "to the strengthening and refreshing of his soul."

"But will you indeed say," it is asked with indignation, affecting to be honest, but having a dash of scepticism in it, "will you indeed say that, without ministerial Absolution, there can be no remission of sins?" We say no such thing⁴. It has often pleased God,—no doubt it often will please Him,—to save a soul without a single means of grace (technically so called), without a Bible, without a Sunday, without a preached Gospel, without

⁴ "The other thing I am to remark in the close of this discourse is, That whatever necessity there be of an external absolution, yet there is *still a greater necessity of the internal qualifications* of men's own minds in order to receive it. These qualifications are a true faith, a true repentance, and new obedience of life; which are the Gospel conditions, required to make any human absolution effectual to our pardon. *God may, and sometimes does (when there is no contempt), dispense with the want of the former, but He never dispenses with the latter; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.*"—Bingham's first Sermon on Absolution, printed as an Appendix to the "Antiquities." Vol. ii. p. 1107. Ed. Bohn, York Street, Covent Garden, 1852.

Bingham's two most valuable Sermons, together with Barrow's Treatise "De Potestate Clavium," nearly exhaust the subject of Absolution.

a Church or a Church instrumentality, without a Sacrament. He loves to show His independence of means sometimes, by dispensing with all Ordinances, great and small. The penitent thief had as strong an assurance of his own salvation as St. Stephen himself had ; yet the penitent thief was not baptized, the penitent thief had never heard a church bell, the penitent thief had never kept a Sunday; the penitent thief had never read a line of the New Testament, the penitent thief had never received the Holy Supper. But surely you will be greatly mistaken, if you conclude that, because God dispensed with these various Ordinances in the penitent thief's case, He will therefore dispense with them in yours and mine. It has pleased Him, in founding His Church, to ordain a certain instrumentality (or rather, system of instrumentalities) for the salvation of souls. One part of this system is called Absolution, and is an authoritative conveyance of Divine pardon through the mouth of one of God's ambassadors to a penitent and believing soul. How far He, in His overflowing mercy, may be pleased to accept sinners who have never received His pardon in this way,—perhaps

because they never had the opportunity, or perhaps because from ignorance they have misapprehended His design, and so, while they have heard absolutions enough, have never realized them in their own experience,—is a matter which must be left to Him entirely. Be it ours to abide scrupulously by His rules, leaving it to His Wisdom, Love, and Power, to make exceptions to them. I believe, from the bottom of my heart, on the ground of His revealed character, that He will wash in the Blood of Christ, and sanctify and glorify, every infant who, whether from the parents' fault, or from mere force of circumstances, has had the misfortune to die unbaptized. But that does not make me the less anxious to have Christ's Ordinance of Baptism complied with as regards my own child.

V. But, while we stoutly maintain, on Scriptural and Prayer Book grounds, that the power of Absolution has been by Our Lord lodged in the Christian Ministry, we hold, on exactly the same grounds, that the exercise of it should be for the most part public, and that only on very rare and exceptional occasions,—where the tender considerate spirit

of the Church of Christ dictates some concession to the cravings of a morbid conscience and a burdened heart,—should it be administered privately. Where in the New Testament is there any trace of a private confession of sins made to an Apostle, or of any private absolution ministered by an Apostle, as the correlative of such confession? There is not the faintest whisper of such a practice from the first page of the Volume to the last. St. Paul absolves the incestuous Corinthian on his repentance and humiliation; but he does it in a letter, which was meant to be publicly read in the Congregation; “To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ.” St. Peter did not say to Simon Magus, “Come to me, and confess your sins, and receive absolution, as the beginning of a better life;” but he refers him entirely to God; “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness; and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” Nor, though to him individually, by a special grant, the power of Absolution had been delegated—“I will give unto thee the keys

of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in Heaven,"—does he allow a fellow-sinner to kneel before him ; Stand up," said he to Cornelius, "I myself also am a man."

Judging partly from this entire absence of any Scriptural evidence in its favour, partly from its being a practice unknown to the primitive Church⁵, and partly also from her own experience of the frightful moral abuses and the numerous superstitions which had grown up around it, our own Church, as represented by the Book of Common Prayer, discourages Private Confession and Absolution, as normal exercises of the spiritual life, and admits them, under any circumstances, *only in the cautious language of exception*. Special confession, indeed, is to be urged upon a sick bed, "if the sick person feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter,"

⁵ See Bingham's Chapter (Antiquities, Book xviii. chap 3) headed, "A particular account of the Exomologesis, or confession used in the discipline of the Ancient Church ; showing it to be a different thing from the Private or Auricular Confession introduced by the Church of Rome"—*passim*.

and Absolution is to be given upon such confession, "if the patient humbly and heartily desire it." And again, if a man cannot quiet his own conscience before communicating (the best method of proceeding this, and that to which the preference is given), he is exhorted to "come to some discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word, he may receive the benefit of Absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." If from these two passages of the Book of Common Prayer, it is to be inferred that the Church of England advises her members periodically to resort to a priest as a normal religious exercise, to unburden their consciences to him, kneeling at his feet, and then to receive from him (although he is unable to assure himself of their penitence and faith) the Absolution in the Visitation of the Sick, then I say that English words have no meaning. The Prayer Book will indeed, I am fully convinced, resist every attempt to represent it as Puritanical or Presbyterian. But I am equally assured that no manipulation in the

world, whether of the ablest lawyer or the subtlest Jesuit, will ever make it out to be Roman. Broad enough to embrace all that is good in rival systems of Theology, it is quite narrow enough to exclude what is evil and mischievous.

But to bring these remarks (already unduly protracted) to a close. Heartily believe in, in order that you may benefit by, the absolving power lodged in the Ministry of the Christian Church. Look to the *public* Absolutions of the Church, as really conveying the pardon of God to penitent sinners; and endeavour to appropriate them by faith. Those of you who are able to attend the daily worship of the Church, may greatly benefit by quietly reviewing every evening (in the privacy of your chamber) the shortcomings, sins, slips of temper and the tongue, committed during the day; and with these fresh upon your mind, confessing them (not to man but to God) in the General Confession at the Office of the succeeding Morning. God, the searcher of hearts, knows exactly what that confession implies in your case; He sees that, though general in its statements, it is particular and

special in its intentions. Then, when the priest, rising from his knees, pronounces the Absolution, you may take it to yourself, though spoken generally, and make it your own by faith in Christ's Ordinance. He it is who acts through His ministers, and who, knowing the state of that conscience, which you have honestly striven to expose to Him, addresses you with that word of comfort and that message of peace. And the same practice may be adopted after a Saturday-evening retrospect of the week, by those who have only leisure to attend Public Worship on Sundays. If devout persons would thus regard, and thus deal with, the Public Absolutions of the Church, preparing themselves to receive them by private heart-searching and examination of conscience, and then listening to them in full assurance of faith, that morbid craving after the Confessional, which is one most unhappy feature of modern Religious Thought, would soon be allayed; while at the same time penitent sinners would receive all the consolation which Our Lord intended them to receive, from the dispensation to them of God's mercy through the ordained channel of Ministerial Absolution.



SERMON II.

Ritualism.

I.

“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.”—REV. viii. 3, 4.



WHAT a beautiful, what an elevating, what a majestic thing must be the worship of Almighty God as carried on in Heaven! The Book of the Revelation gives us some few glimpses of it; and this is one of them. You will observe that the imagery, which is uniformly employed throughout this Book in describing the services of the Heavenly Sanctuary, is all Temple-imagery,

drawn from the divinely-prescribed worship of the Mosaic Tabernacle and Temple. In this passage you have the mention of an altar of incense in Heaven, just as in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle, and afterwards of the Temple, there was an altar of acacia wood overlaid with gold, on which incense was offered every morning and evening. And in the Gospel of St. Luke you find the priest Zacharias doing exactly what the officiating angel in the Heavenly Sanctuary is here described as doing, burning incense in the Holy Place (symbolical probably, of Our Blessed Lord's intercession), while "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense."

The foundation of this resemblance between the worship of the Jewish Temple and the worship of Heaven is to be traced up to the circumstance of God's having charged Moses, in framing the Tabernacle, to "make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount." Moses, in the course of the forty days' miraculous communication held by him with God in the mount, had (it appears) a glimpse given to him of the worship which is offered to God by the blessed spirits who

surround His Throne in Heaven. The features of this worship he is commanded to express, so far as ritual arrangement and earthly material could express them, in the structure and services of the Tabernacle. Though we know that we, as Christians, are not bound to all the particulars of Jewish worship, yet from the charge given to Moses we may learn this general lesson, that we are to look to the Heavenly Sanctuary for the model of our devotions, and to endeavour to hallow God's Name upon earth,—as indeed 'Our Lord teaches us in His perfect prayer,—with all the veneration, and all the solemnity, and all the beauty of holiness, which pervades angelic worship,—“as it is in Heaven.”

In pursuance of my design, announced in my last Sermon, of offering to you some parting words of guidance on the chief questions which agitate the Church, and divide religious opinion, I shall make my text the foundation of some remarks upon the feature which, in some Churches of our Communion, Public Worship is assuming, and which goes by the name of Ritualism.

First; what is it, as indicated by its name?

The word *Ritualism* is formed from the word *Rites*; and therefore denotes some practice or practices, connected with the rites of the Church. And by way of expressing disapproval of these practices, on the part of those who coined the word, a termination is added, the usual force of which is derogatory, and indicates something spurious and degenerate, as may be seen by its appearance in such words as *pietism* (a morbid form of piety), *spiritualism* (a degenerate spirituality), *asceticism* (an unhealthy exaggeration of the principle of self-denial).

Now this brief study of the word shall furnish my first remark upon the subject, which is that the question of Ritualism being praiseworthy or objectionable is altogether a question of degree, and not a question of principle. This must be borne in mind throughout. The very title of our Prayer Book makes express mention of rites; "The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and other *Rites* and Ceremonies of the Church." Every Churchman (and I address none but Churchmen) gives in his adherence to the principle of observing *certain* rites and ceremonies in the worship of

the Church. Nay; probably every member of every Christian Communion—with the exception only of the Quakers—however much he may think fit to rail against forms, admits the necessity and expediency of *some* form and order of proceedings in the worship of Almighty God. Even as regards the vestments to be worn by the ministers of the Church at the times of their ministration (which form, as you know, a feature in the Ritualistic controversy), it may be presumed that none of us would approve of our ministers appearing at the Prayer Desk or the Altar in the costume of daily domestic life. And as regards the *ornaments* of the Church, there is probably none of us, who, if about to build a church, would not employ in building a certain amount of decorative art, and place about it either in the interior, or exterior, or both, a certain number of Christian symbols, such as the Cross, the monogram of the name Jesus, and so forth. And again, as regards the giving effect to the Church's worship by significant and symbolical actions, which is one great principle of Ritualism, there is none of us who would like to dispense with the giving of the ring in marriage, or with the cruciform signature of the

brow in Baptism, and none of us who would not miss one of the main features in the Burial Service if the Rubric were expunged which prescribes that, while the priest says the sentence of committal to the ground, "the earth shall be cast upon the body by some standing by." Of course it is easy to fling a thoughtless censure at things being done for effect in church; but the fact is that nobody (except, as I say, a Quaker) really ignores altogether the principle of things being done for effect in Religious Services. It is perfectly clear that a marriage would be, in the judgment of God, and in the court of conscience, just as valid, without the giving of a ring as with it, and that a few words of solemn prayer and benediction at a funeral, and of solemn warning to the survivors, would abundantly satisfy every requirement of reason and Holy Scripture, without throwing earth three times upon the coffin. Why then do we (on the whole) cling to these ceremonies, which give no additional validity whatever, to the ordinances of Religion? Simply because we feel them to be significant and impressive; because, to quote the preface to the Prayer Book (and you will not easily find elsewhere a more exhaustive and

satisfactory treatment of this subject), "they do serve to a decent order and godly discipline, and are apt to stir up the dull mind of man to the remembrance of his duty to God, whereby he might be edified." Yes; "whereby he might be edified." Have women, think you, ever been reminded of their marriage vow by looking at their wedding ring? If so, this is an instance of edification accruing, if not from Ritualism, yet from Ritual;—for the presentation of the ring in espousals is a rite and ceremony of the Church, of very ancient standing¹.

¹ Bingham says (Antiquities, Book xxii. chap. 3, sect. 5); "Together with these espousal gifts, or as a part of them, it was usual for the man to give the woman a ring, as a further token and testimony of the contract. This was an innocent ceremony used by the Romans before the times of Christianity, and in some measure admitted by the Jews; whence it was adopted among the Christian rites of espousal without any opposition or contradiction."

"Various analogies and figurative applications have sprung from the ceremony of the ring, some of which are thus stated by Dean Comber and Wheatley. The matter of which this ring is made is gold, to signify how noble and durable our affection is; the form is round, to imply that our respect shall never have an end; the place of it is on the fourth finger of the left hand, where the ancients thought was a vein which

But though, as Churchmen, you may consider yourselves bound at all events to *tolerate* some Rites and Ceremonies in the celebration of Divine Worship, it may be doubted, whether all of you are fully satisfied, that a certain amount of Ritual in the services of the Christian Church has the warrant of Scripture and primitive Antiquity. You have been apt to think that Christ came to supersede Judaism (one of whose leading features was a Ceremonial Law), and to found an entirely spiritual religion; that He dealt a death-blow to all Rites and Ceremonies, when He said to the woman of Samaria, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth;" and that the purest form of worship was its earliest form,

came directly from the heart, and where it may be always in view; and being a finger least used, where it may be least subject to be worn out."—*Hook's Church Dictionary*, Art. RING in *Holy Matrimony*.

These imaginary properties and significances, applied to a ceremony which was adopted into the Church system from Paganism and Judaism, remind one of the mystical meaning found in the Chasuble (or Communion Vestment), which was originally nothing else than the *pænula*, or ordinary outer costume of the Romans at the time of the introduction of Christianity into the Empire.

when Christians, under stress of persecution, were driven to worship, not in Gothic cathedrals, or Churches decorated at festive seasons with myrtle and box, but in dens and caves of the earth. All this sort of reasoning, which is extremely popular, betrays an entire want of clearness of thought on the subject. The religion which Christ came to found is NOT entirely spiritual; and we may safely say that, if it were so, it would be a religion unsuited to the wants of man. It carries with it two outward visible signs, called Sacraments, ordained by the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls Himself, in both which matter is blessed and consecrated to the conveyance of an inward and spiritual grace. These Sacraments embody the principle of impressing the mind by means of Ritual; for can it be maintained by any candid person that the Water of Baptism is *not* intended to symbolize to the outward eye the purification of the soul, or that the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist are *not* intended to stir in us, by an appeal to our senses, a more lively remembrance of the Body which was bruised, and the Blood which was poured out, for our iniquities? And if these things *were* so intended, it can never be said with truth

that the Gospel of Christ makes no appeal to the senses of man by way of effect.

But secondly, as to Our Lord's sublime declaration that all acceptable worship must be "in spirit and in truth," no man is at liberty to interpolate in it (as many do) the word *only*, and to understand Christ as forbidding all worship *save* that of the spirit. Had He meant to forbid our paying to God the homage of the body, why did He Himself kneel in the garden of Gethsemane? The great scope of the passage is, that *without the action of the heart, the will, and the conscience, there can be no worship at all*, seeing that God is a Spirit, and therefore it is impossible to approach Him without an exercise of the spiritual faculty. But it is quite illogical to infer that, because an exercise of the spiritual faculty is essential to worship, therefore there is no other element in worship than the spiritual faculty. If I say, "There must be fire, where there is smoke," I imply—what is absolutely true—that without the action of fire there can be no smoke. But what a misrepresentation would it be, if a man made me out to say that there is nothing in smoke *but* the action of fire, no particles of

charred wood (or other substance) contributing to the phenomenon called smoke, but that smoke was the *pure* action of fire, operating upon nothing! Nor is the argument against a certain outward sumptuousness in Divine Service, which is often drawn from the worship of the primitive Christians, in "dens and caves of the earth," any more sound. The primitive Christians worshipped so by force of necessity, and under stress of circumstances; they worshipped as they were obliged, not as they were inclined. The question is, what tendencies as to worship began to develop themselves in the mind of Christians, as soon as the Roman Empire adopted the Faith, and the shackles of restraint were removed from the Church? Did not ornate worship, symbolical worship, ritual worship, which had been latent in the mind of the Church all along, then begin to show its head, and gradually unfold itself in all its details?—And would any one, who uses the above argument against an ornate worship, be content to go the whole length to which his own principle would lead him? The Philippian gaoler was, no doubt, baptized out of a prison bowl; and I suppose that his was one of the most efficacious baptisms ever

administered; but if it were proposed, on that ground, to knock down yonder beautiful font², and to substitute for it a prison bowl placed upon a stand, as a nearer approach to the Scriptural model in the administration of Baptism, I suppose there is no one who would not see the grotesque absurdity of such a proposal, and to whose lips there would not rise the very reasonable remonstrance; "But our circumstances are not exactly those of the Philippian gaoler. I am not satisfied that St. Paul would not have used a decorated font, if he could have got one."

We have not wasted our time, if we have said enough to prove that the *principle* of ritual observances is recognized by the Gospel, and by the almost universal instinct of the Christian Church; and that, therefore, the question at issue in this novel phenomenon called Ritualism is not a question of *principle* at all, but a question of *degree*,—as to how far the principle of giving effect to Divine Worship by significant and striking ceremonial should

² This alludes to the font at St. John's Church, Paddington, a very beautiful one, given by young members of the congregation, who had received instruction there previously to their Confirmation.

be allowed to go. That it may be allowed to go very much too far, so as to overlay and stifle the spirit of true religion; that, just as the body, which is the tabernacle of the immortal soul, may be (and often is) pampered, and over-indulged, and arrayed with effeminate luxuriousness, and daubed with abominable cosmetics, (all which softness weakens and impairs the energies of the soul,) so the external manifestations of devotion may be carried to such lengths as to destroy the life of devotion,—is abundantly clear from reason, and from those past experiences of the Church, which necessitated the Reformation. “This *our excessive multitude* of Ceremonies,” says Cranmer, in that admirable treatise “Of Ceremonies,” which has been already quoted, “was so great, and many of them so dark; that they did more confound and darken, than declare and set forth, Christ’s benefits unto us.” The question then arises as to what limitations must be put to the Ceremonial of the Church. And I propose to answer this question, as regards our own Communion, under four heads. Ritual must confine itself within the limits prescribed by Scripture, by reason, by the law of the English Church,

as interpreted by the recognized tribunals, and, lastly, by the reverence due to ecclesiastical authority. Fully had I intended to bring the whole subject within the compass of a single discourse; and I very much regret that it is impossible to do so, inasmuch as I know full well how many members of every congregation there are, who are apt to carry off one view of a question without taking into account what has to be offered on the other side, and how, therefore, by postponing the completion of the subject, I shall risk the false conclusion that, because I have advocated the principle of Ritual, I therefore approve the extravagances of Ritualism. But the other risk which I should incur, of dismissing the grave cautions, which I should have to give, in a few hurried words at the end of a Sermon; the prolongation of the usual Service this morning by the circumstance of the collection being made in the church; and last (not least), the great inclemency of the weather³, make it most undesirable to detain you longer.

³ This sermon was preached in the morning of Sunday, January 6, 1867, a day to be remembered in London for the severity of the weather and the thickness of the fog. It thawed and cleared in the evening.

I will only add, in conclusion, that the analogy already incidentally suggested between the external manifestations of devotion, and the body of man, is a very just one, and one which may be pursued further as a guide to our thoughts on this important subject. The body is really an element of our nature, of which we cannot, and should not desire to, rid ourselves. Similarly; the rites and ceremonies of the Church are really an ingredient in true devotion. Devotion has in heaven, and ought to have upon earth, certain expressive external forms, which are not, as some suppose, a mere raiment, (and, therefore, altogether dispensable), but which stand in vital connexion with its inner life;—and these forms, from simple kneeling in prayer up to the more recondite ceremonial of the Church, are, in a large sense of the word, “rites.”—Again; as the mind and body have a reciprocal action, and as in order to the health of the mind the health of the body must be studied and cared for, so the ritual of the Church, however trifling the details of it may seem to some, is a matter of real moment and serious concern to those who have the interests of true religion at

heart.—And, as the body may easily be pampered, till it becomes the clog and encumbrance of the soul, so Ritual may be elaborated and developed to an extent, which shall be positively detrimental to that very spirit of devotion, which its object is to foster. That inward spirit of devotion, involving humiliation, self-abasement, self-distrust, and a filial yearning of the heart towards God in Christ, as our all in all, is the result of the direct action of God's Spirit on the human soul. Invoke Him more constantly into your hearts, when you come here to worship; seek to be more thoroughly penetrated by His blessed influence; realize more profoundly the Saviour's Presence, which is covenanted to the two or three gathered together in His Name; and, under these conditions, even if the external manifestation of worship be not all that it ought to be, you shall not fail to carry away from it a comfort and a calm strength, which shall stand you in stead in the hour of trial.





SERMON III.

Ritualism.

II.

“The lust of the eyes . . . is not of the Father, but is of the world.”—I JOHN ii. 16.

BY unforeseen circumstances, I am enabled to resume my subject of last Sunday at an earlier period than I then contemplated. And this I regard as an advantage, inasmuch as what was then said will be fresher in your memories. Let me first give a brief and rapid summary of it.

Our subject was Ritualism. And on the last occasion we dealt exclusively with the principle of it. We saw that its principle, as distinct from the degree to which it should be carried, was clearly recognized and ap-

proved both by Holy Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer;—that the two Sacraments, which are the leading rites of our Religion, are instances of a divinely ordained symbolism, inasmuch as no one can deny that the Water employed in one of them is the symbol of the purification of the soul, conferred upon the duly qualified recipient; or that the Bread and Wine employed in the other, are symbols of the Body and Blood of Christ (indeed the ultra Protestant doctrine, first broached by Zwingle, but repudiated by all orthodox Churches, is that the Bread and Wine are *mere* symbols and nothing more); that the magnificent declaration of our Lord, that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, does not at all exclude the homage of the body, or the external circumstances of worship, but simply means that without the action of the conscience, will, and moral powers, there can be no worship at all; and finally that our Prayer Book sanctions the use of striking and significant Ceremonies in Divine Service, when it prescribes the crossing of the brow in Baptism, the giving of the ring in marriage, and the casting of earth on the body at a funeral.—The principle of

Ritual having been thus established, we then proceed to point out that the principle might easily be carried to a vicious excess, and we proposed to consider in a subsequent Sermon what limitations must be put upon it. At this point then we resume our argument.

I. The first limitation which must be put on excess of ritual is found, by implication, in Holy Scripture itself. As far as the Christian Church is concerned, the only divinely authorized ritual is that of the two Sacraments—the symbolical immersion under the water to express the death unto sin—the symbolical breaking of bread and pouring out of wine, to express the breaking of Christ's Body and the shedding of His Blood for us. But surely we must look at these Ordinances not only as giving a general sanction to ritual, but as indicating the great principles, which should guide the Christian Church in all her ritual arrangements. Great simplicity is one of these principles. There is nothing approaching to the elaborate, or the pompous, in either Sacrament; the immersion in water, the thanksgiving over food, are among the commonest and homeliest acts of our daily life. And, therefore, though both reason and reve-

rence dictate that we should employ our very best and costliest in God's worship, and specially in His Sacraments, which are the Holy of Holies of His worship, still it must be admitted that any very complicated and elaborate ceremonial is not at all in keeping with what I may call the genius of the Sacraments. If Christian ritual is to be determined by that genius, there should be in it surely (however rich the exterior in wealthy districts) a *grave simplicity*; and every approach to excess of ornament should be removed as an unseemly excrescence.

Plainness of meaning is another principle of Christian ritual, which the Sacraments teach. There is symbolism in them; but it is a symbolism which speaks for itself, and requires little (if any) explanation. "As the body of yonder infant is washed with pure water by the minister of Baptism, so his soul, in answer to the prayers of the Church, is washed from the stain of his birth-sin, and cleansed by God's purifying grace;"—"As yonder bread is broken, and yonder wine poured out by the minister of the Eucharist, so Christ's Body was cruelly pierced for us, and His Blood shed;"—these are very easy symbols, which

may be explained to children and rustics. A wonderful contrast indeed to many dark ceremonies of the mediæval Church, which to the initiated in theological lore may have had some significance, but must have simply dazed and bewildered the people in general, without conveying to their minds any holy lesson, "whereby they might be edified."

And then, secondly, there is the Scriptural warning against "the lust of the eyes," which certainly (however little we may usually think of it in this connexion) may be imported into the externals of religion, and materially vitiate its spirit. By "the lust of the eyes," is meant that natural love of display, and that liability to be led astray by it, which moralists have so often exposed. It has a strong hold upon the human heart, this lust of the eyes, showing itself first in the child's fondness for new and fine clothes, in the woman's love of dress (which to many hundreds of women has proved the beginning of their ruin and degradation), and peeping out even in men, however serious or sacred their pursuits; for we all have in us a feminine element, as having been born of women, and a puerile element, as having once been children.—With this weak and foolish

propensity to display there coalesces very subtly, in the minds of educated and refined persons, a different and quite an innocent sentiment, which *in its place* has done admirable service in humanizing and civilizing the race, but which must not be thrust *out of its place*;—the love of artistic beauty. This love of beauty in outward form it is, which so fascinates many educated minds with what is called a high ritual, that they cannot conceive of worship without external accessories, processions, costumes, lights, incense, and so forth. But surely the taste for beauty of form, when carried to this length, or even when carried far in this direction, is an entirely morbid one, which it behoves us to mortify rather than to gratify. No Eucharist can have been more efficacious than the first, which was administered by Our Lord Himself, in the course of a supper, to twelve men stretched on couches round a table. Nor can any Baptism have been much more efficacious than that which was administered by St. Paul to the gaoler of Philippi, probably out of a prison bowl. A sound and healthy mind, while it will dispose us to offer for God's Service and Worship the costliest and best things, which money can purchase or art

can devise, will at the same time recognize the entire independence of Worship upon those ornaments, with which the reverence of the Church and the pious instincts of her children have decked it out.

II. But, in the second place, the ritual of the Christian Church must be restrained within the bounds prescribed by Reason. I have already pointed out in the last Sermon, that neither Reason nor Scripture at all forbid the introduction into Public Worship of striking and significant ceremonial, by way of making it effective. But the question is, what kind and what amount of ceremonial is striking and significant. And the answer which Reason gives is, that simplicity in ceremonial is essential to effect; that the effect is usually marred by elaborating the strokes, and overlaying the colours. Until the recent appearance of Ritualism amongst us, only one very elaborate ceremonial was ever witnessed in the Church of England—and that was the ceremony which takes place in Westminster Abbey at the inauguration or coronation of a Sovereign. And I appeal to those who have witnessed this imposing and magnificent ceremonial, to say whether the great number of the cere-

monies, and the consequent intricate arrangements of the Service, do not rather detract from, than add to, the general effect,—whether, supposing the anointing of the Sovereign, and the actual coronation stood alone, followed (of course) by a celebration of the Holy Communion with all the state and sumptuousness befitting the occasion, the impression left on the minds of the people would not be more forcible than at present, when the attention is distracted from the great points at issue by sundry lesser pageantries (such as the presentation of the spurs, the sword, the ring, and so forth), all having a meaning no doubt (and a good and sound meaning), but still all complicating the ritual, and (I suppose) necessitating a rehearsal, as if the performance were a drama, and not the solemn Benediction of God's Vicegerent in the State. At all events, however this may be, the general assertion that simplicity is essential to effect cannot be denied. This may be said to be a canon of good taste; for it is a principle which pervades all art and all literature. And why should not the same principle be a sound and good one, when applied, as it was applied by our Reformers, to regulate the ritual of the Church?

That ritual they found overgrown and swollen with many and elaborate ceremonies, where one or two would have been more striking, and would not have risked the distraction of the mind from the great essentials of the Ordinance. And accordingly they used the pruning knife with a very unsparing hand. For example; they found in the office of Baptism, not only the immersion in water, or affusion of water, in the Name of the Holy Trinity (which are the essential constituents of the Ordinance) but also the clothing of the baptized in a white garment (to symbolize the justification conferred by the Sacrament), and the placing of salt in his mouth, and of a taper in his hand (to show that he was called, as a Christian, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world). The meaning of these ceremonies was unexceptionable; but they took off from the simplicity of the rite, and served to divert attention from the essential form instituted by Christ Himself, which is the washing of water. Therefore, like many similar rites connected with other Ordinances, the Reformers pruned them away; and if perchance some of us should sigh over the loss of some of them, as beautiful

and poetic symbols of Scriptural Truth, and wish that the pruning hook had not been so rigorously applied, we must remember that if our wise Reformers had been less stern in this matter, superstitions, inextricably intertwined with some of these Ceremonies, must have been left standing, and some of the most valuable principles of the Reformation must have been compromised. It is impossible to straighten a crooked stick, without straining it (somewhat violently) into a curve opposite to that in which it is crooked.

III. The third point is, that, whatever other Communion may see fit to enact and practise as regards ritual, we of the Church of England must restrain ourselves dutifully within the limits prescribed by our own Law. And you know that there is great controversy at present as to what these limits are, and that, though opinions of very great weight have been expressed on the subject both by legal and ecclesiastical authorities, little has yet been definitely settled by our regularly constituted tribunals. The questions to be settled are by no means so easy of settlement as might appear to persons who have only a superficial knowledge of the subject. For I suppose it

must be admitted that the mere silence of the Book of Common Prayer on the subject of a rite or usage, is not of itself sufficient to forbid that rite or usage, or, in other words, that omission is not prohibition. Omission would be tantamount to prohibition, if the Church of England had been (as some suicidally maintain) *founded* at the Reformation, and if our Prayer Book were a wholly new manual of Public Devotion, drawn up without any reference to an already existing system of usages and ceremonies. But we know that neither of these positions can for a moment be admitted. The Church of England is built upon the foundation, not of Cranmer and Latimer, but of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner stone; it is identically the same Church with that which has existed in this country ever since the mission of the monk Augustine to our shores,—only cleared, by God's good Providence, of the superstitions which in the course of ages had gathered over it, and concealed and disfigured the original structure. A tower is the same tower still, though the man, in whose grounds it stands, may have cut away the ivy, which had mantled over it in large flaunting masses, and

thus has disclosed its fair proportions, and opened a way for the light to pass in at the windows, and dislodged the vermin, and the birds of the night, which sheltered in the foliage. And that the Book of Common Prayer presupposes and refers to certain usages of public worship, existing at the time of its compilation, is abundantly clear from its opening direction, which runs thus; "The Morning and Evening Prayer shall be used *in the accustomed place* of the church, chapel, or chancel; except it shall be otherwise determined by the Ordinary of the place. And the chancels shall remain as they have done in times past." "In *the accustomed place*;" but in what accustomed place? Evidently the place where it had been customary for the priest, from the earliest planting of the Church in England, to say Matins and Vespers, and other daily Offices of the Church. There was no need of breaking through the old associations, as regards the customary place of saying Morning and Evening Prayer, though as regards the saying of the Communion Service, the superstitions which had gathered round the Sacrament of the Altar, made a change in the posture

of the priest desirable, and accordingly he was directed to stand at the North-side¹. And we know that the great bulk of our Prayer Book is a translation from the old Latin Service Books, with only such modifications and changes as the acceptance of the Reformed Faith by the whole Church of England had rendered necessary.—And as it were

¹ After reading carefully (and I hope candidly) a good deal of what has been recently written on the meaning of the “North-side,” I cannot help coming to the conclusion that, on the whole, the usual way of understanding the direction (that is, as meaning the North end of the table) is the right one. How in any other position can the priest “with readiness and decency break the Bread BEFORE THE PEOPLE?” Surely it is evasive of the natural force of these words to say that all they mean is, that, *while he breaks the Bread, his person must be in sight of the people*. At the same time it is clear enough by the Rubric, that immediately before the Prayer of Consecration, the priest must for a moment stand BEFORE THE TABLE (with his back turned to the people) in order to arrange the elements in such a manner, that he may, from his position at the North end, with readiness and decency touch them at the appointed time. Cushions, which make it difficult to do this any how, should clearly be abolished. The above view is, I believe, that of Canon Robertson (no mean authority), though I have not his book (“How shall we conform to the Liturgy?”) at hand for reference.

to indicate that the Prayer Book really leans upon a previously existing arrangement of ritual, we find directions wanting in it, which are evidently needed. There are no directions at all, for example, as to the posture of the people during the different parts of the Communion Service; and we are thrown back for the ascertainment of these postures upon reason or analogy, or upon traditional usage from the earliest time. And, moreover, there are certain practices uniformly (or nearly so) observed in every Church throughout the country; which are never mentioned, much less prescribed, in the Prayer Book, but which are relics of old traditional usages, which the Prayer Book, though silent upon them, has never been considered to forbid. Thus, before the Gospel we either say or sing "Glory be to Thee, O Lord," which is no where enjoined by our Communion Service; and in the Creed we usually turn eastward, and make a reverence at the name of Jesus. These are slight matters in themselves; but our compliance with even one of them shows that we do not consider the omission of a certain usage from the Prayer Book to be quite tantamount to its prohibition.

And this creates, no doubt, a real difficulty in the mind of an expositor of the Law, when it is attempted to revive certain practices of the Mediæval Church, on the ground that they existed previously to the Reformation, and have never been expressly forbidden.—Well is it for you and me that it does not and cannot devolve upon us to settle what the Law may be on these subjects. We have a much easier and simpler task; which is, as soon as the Law is made known (as I trust it will be soon by some competent² Tribunal), to obey it, all our prepossessions notwithstanding. It is a law, observe, which deals with and defines the

² I know that many very great authorities are opposed altogether to the settlement of these questions by Law. But I cannot agree with them. Surely there is good sense enough and right feeling enough, in both of the opposed parties in the Church, to defer to the Law, if the Law were once for all explicitly and definitively announced. Nor can I feel that great aversion to the settlement of this matter by the Judicial Committee, which is felt by many of our best Churchmen. *The question is not doctrinal at all.* It is simply a question as to the true meaning of certain old documents. And such a question would probably be more satisfactorily settled by lawyers, than by men whose very profession gives them something of a theological bias. There is no question either of making the Law, or altering the Law, but only of *declaring the Law.*

external ornaments and the ceremonial accessories of Divine Worship; and *no mere externals, not themselves of Divine Institution, can be worth a resistance to properly constituted authority.*

IV. And meanwhile, until the Law is authoritatively declared by the tribunals, let us be guided in all such matters, as modest and devout Church people are bound to be, by the opinions and counsels of our Bishops³. This is the method of resolving doubts, which our Prayer Book itself indicates in one of its prefatory articles; "And forasmuch as nothing can be so plainly set forth, but doubts may arise in the use and practice of the same; to appease all such diversity (if any arise) and for the resolution of all doubts, concerning the manner how to understand, do, and execute, the things contained in this book; the parties that so doubt, or diversely take any thing, shall alway resort to the Bishop of the diocese, who by his discretion

³ This sermon was preached some time before the Upper House of Convocation promulgated their judgment on the Ritual question. I am glad to have so high a confirmation of the principle of action advocated above.

shall take order for the quieting and appeasing of the same ; so that the same order be not contrary to any thing contained in this book." And we cannot doubt, surely, that this glad yielding of our own judgment to that of those who are set over us in the Lord, is a course upon which the blessing of God would rest. It must be allowed on all hands that the Ritual which it is now sought to revive—however beautiful and poetic much of it may be in its symbolism, and however (it may be) permitted, or even (in parts) authorized, by our standards of appeal—has been in abeyance in the Reformed Church of England for three centuries. If our Law really sanctions any such rites, it is a law which, almost ever since its enactment, has been allowed to lapse into desuetude with the common consent of all parties. And though it is true, as one of our judges⁴ recently remarked, when a suit on these matters came before him, that the general non-observance of a law cannot be taken for one moment to repeal it, yet, surely the general non-observance does modify and reduce very considerably the criminality of an individual who breaks it.

⁴ Sir Stephen Lushington.

If, therefore, the letter of the first rubric in the Prayer Book be pleaded as sanctioning, or rather compelling (for mark that, if it does any thing, it does this—it compels, not sanctions; “such and such ornaments SHALL BE,” not MAY BE, “retained and be in use,”) the use of certain ancient vestments in the celebration of the Holy Communion; it may be answered that non-compliance with a law, which no one (or next to no one) has obeyed for three centuries, may be excused; *but not so an insubordinate opposition to the advice and expressed judgment of our Fathers in Christ.* Surely the Ritual Law (assuming it to be the Law), must yield to the moral, where the two seem to us to come into collision. Holy Scripture no where directs (though I believe that it no where forbids or discourages), the wearing of a peculiar robe in the celebration of the Holy Communion. But it is full of explicit directions to this effect; “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates;” “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves;” “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers;” “Likewise ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder.”

I have pleaded for a spirit of humility and submission in dealing practically with this question. But I must not conclude without pleading also for a spirit of enlarged and enlightened charity. Surely our experience of the past, if nothing else, should lead us to this. A rapid fermentation of opinion on all subjects connected with Religion and the Church has been going on for several years in the public mind, out of which have arisen wonderful changes, and changes (as every candid person must admit) in many instances for the better. Of course evil is working most strenuously in the present system of things, and is called forth all the more powerfully by the presence and antagonism of the Spirit of God; but no one can venture to say that the religious movement, which took its name from the University of Oxford, and which has ended so very disastrously for several individuals, by landing them in the bosom of the Church of Rome, has not (under God's guiding Providence) brought about a great revolution for good in the opinions and practices of the Church of England. In the architecture of our Churches, and in the reverent care bestowed upon them, in the

method of performing Divine Service in them, in the frequency of the Services, in the numerous opportunities now every where offered of receiving the Holy Communion, in the preparation of Candidates for Confirmation, in the addresses of the Bishops at Ordination, in the general earnestness of the Clergy in their ministrations, and the general activity of the Bishops in their superintendence of the flock, in all these points it were mere silly prejudice to deny that of late years there has been a great and blessed change among us for the better, and that this change has swept over the Church in the wake of the movement which I referred to just now, though that movement (like every other human movement) has had in it elements of spiritual mischief no less than of spiritual health, which the great enemy of souls has no doubt done his utmost to foment.

Well; this Ritualism (as it is called) is one strong current in the great tide of that larger and comprehensive movement. People may storm and rave against it, but it will work itself out in due time; for harm, I doubt not, to the souls of many individuals, some of whom, weak and unstable, and allowing the imagi-

nation to preponderate over the judgment, will be carried by it into the embraces of the corrupt and idolatrous Church of Rome ; while sounder minds will remain as staunch in their adherence to the Church of their Baptism as ever, and yet will be found, when the current has swept past and over them, to have been substantially influenced for good, in the way both of enlightenment and of practice. What if even the extravagances of the movement (and every movement originated by human minds has its extravagances) should be intended, by calling attention to the subject, to teach us that there is an ideal of Public Worship which we have not yet reached—something infinitely sublime, attractive, fascinating, which we must endeavour to realize out of the grand materials furnished to us so amply by the Book of Common Prayer,—an echo upon earth of the Angelic Worship which is carried on in the Upper Sanctuary. It may be so. I trust it will be so. I trust that the God, who has been so evidently dealing in Grace with the Church of England for the last half-century, and raising her gradually to a higher standard of faith and practice, will still make this

movement, as He has made other previous movements, minister to her for good. Meanwhile, let us use no harsh words nor taunting irritating epithets to those of our brethren who adopt these Ritual practices, as tending in their opinion to edification. Very possibly they may be one with us *at heart*, while between our practices in Public Worship and theirs there may be the widest possible divergence to *the eye*. Harmony is not monotony; and unity in the Church does not imply a similarity in the outward forms of Public Worship, but merely the presence of similar ideas in the mind, and similar sentiments in the hearts of the worshippers. I conclude with an instance of this.

One of the Ritualistic Clergy⁵ has, in the course of this past week, announced to his

⁵ I allude to the Rev. A. Mackonochie of St. Alban's, Holborn, whose address to his flock (however little one may agree with his conclusions) must be said to be very temperate and Christian in its spirit, and moreover ably and clearly written. There is one incidental expression in it, however, which seems to me full of danger, and against which I must enter a respectful protest,—the clause, namely, in which he interprets the words of the Catechism, “the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received

people that the incense, which it is now attempted to introduce into the Services of the Reformed Church, is designed to be a symbol of Our Lord's Merits and Intercession, which are always full of fragrance to the All Holy and All Pure God ; and that the meaning of incensing the persons who are to officiate, and the utensils which are to be employed in the Divine Service is, that no person, or action, or thing, can possibly be accepted by God, which is not presented to Him through the merits and intercession of Christ. I may quarrel with that man's *practice* ; I may say that the symbolism of his incense is a "childish" thing of the Old Dispensation, which under the New has been "put away;" but I have an entire and cordial agreement with the truth, which he symbolizes by his incense, and I only wish that I

by the faithful in the Lord's Supper," to mean, "*by all Christians.*" But surely the meaning of *the faithful* in this connexion is "*true Christians,*" "those who have the true and living faith, which works by love," not the nominally orthodox. This meaning is required by the language of the 28th Article ; "To such as *rightly, worthily,* and WITH FAITH, receive the same, the Bread which we eat is a partaking of the Body of Christ, &c."

felt it more deeply. Yes, Blessed Jesus! let us never presume to offer to the All Holy God, any thing which passes not first through Thy Hands as our Great High Priest, and through the channel of Thy Intercession! Our preaching, our prayers, our Sacraments, are all full of sin; and must be utterly rejected at the Throne of God, if God find not in them the savour of Thy merits and Mediation! Pray for us, when we pray for ourselves; be in the midst of us, when we are gathered together in Thy Name. So, when the two or three agree upon earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, their request shall prevail; it shall be done for them of Thy Father which is in Heaven!





SERMON IV.

The Doctrine of the Eucharist.

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.”—

JOHN vi. 53.

THIS prosecution of my purpose to offer you, in closing my ministry among you, a few words of parting counsel on subjects which at present agitate the Church, and divide religious opinion, I have spoken to you in preceding sermons of the power of Absolution and of Ritualism. I will speak to-day of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist; and if on every subject of religious thought we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in order to our arriving at the truth, more especially do we need it here. For in

proportion to the importance and preciousness of certain articles of Faith, is the dust and cloud of controversy, which have been raised about them. And this holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, "which is so divine and comfortable a thing to those who receive it worthily," descends to us in this nineteenth century, not as Christ and His Apostles presented it to us, but covered (if I may use so humble a figure in so dignified a connexion) with the cobwebs of human speculations, woven over it by subtle and curious (albeit devout) minds; and in our endeavours to view it simply and freshly, we shall have to brush away these, and to give heed to the Apostolic warning, "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit."

Our only guide here, as on former occasions, shall be the Bible, interpreted by the Book of Common Prayer; and it will be my endeavour to exhibit faithfully every feature of their teaching.

We hear much of the Spiritual Presence of Christ in connexion with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and the acknowledgment of this Real Presence, as distinct, on the one

hand, from the corporeal Presence, which is the Romish tenet, and, on the other, from the merely figurative Presence, which is the error of Zwingle, is made the test of orthodoxy. Nor can there be the slightest doubt that there is in the Eucharist a Spiritual Presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ, recognized by the heart of the penitent believer ; that there is a broad distinction between this, and that carnal and localized Presence which the Church of Rome maintains ; and an equally broad distinction between this, and the figure of a dying and absent Christ, to which some reduce this highest of Christian Ordinances. But I would ask whether, although the Holy Communion unquestionably involves the Real Presence of Christ, this is its central idea, its leading thought ? I humbly conceive that it is not. Where in the Bible, or in the Prayer Book, is the idea of *the Presence* of Christ found in connexion with this Sacrament ? We are told that the elements are His Body and Blood ; are the communion (or joint-participation) of His Body and Blood ; that the cup is the New Testament in His Blood ; that both parts of the Ordinance are to be observed in remembrance of Him ; that it is a showing

forth or announcement of the Lord's Death ; that except we eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, we have no life in us ; that in eating the flesh and drinking the blood of God's Son, Jesus Christ, our sinful bodies are made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood ; that His Body and Blood are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, and that their souls are strengthened and refreshed by this spiritual food, as their bodies are by the bread and wine ; that God hath given His Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our spiritual food and sustenance in that holy Sacrament ; that if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament, then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood ; we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us ; that the Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper only after an heavenly and spiritual manner ; and that the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper, is faith ;—but the ideas suggested by these passages are different from that of the Presence

of Christ, and surely there is some risk in importing into the subject an idea, however true and orthodox, which is not immediately suggested by the Scriptural and Liturgical phraseology. The leading idea, which that phraseology *does* suggest, is one which, while it involves the Presence of Christ, goes far beyond it; it is the idea of *union with Christ*, an union as close and vital as is the union of food with the living frame, which in process of time becomes part of the frame, and is undistinguishable from it. Of course, if Our Lord be not really and truly in the Sacrament, we cannot be united to Him by means of the Sacrament; but the thought of union with Him is a higher and more blessed thought than that of merely being in His Presence. Indeed His *Presence* is covenanted by His own words to the mere act of assembling in His Name for united prayer,—a far lower act than that of Holy Communion. “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, *there am I in the midst of them.*” Doubtless this promise will apply

with a peculiar emphasis to the celebration of the Holy Communion, inasmuch as then most emphatically do Christ's disciples meet in their Master's Name; to plead His blood and merits, not in words only, but by a significant and efficacious action. But no one will limit the words to the Holy Communion, or exclude them from their application to ordinary congregational, or even family worship, when the Holy Communion is not administered.

Having thus obtained from a rapid survey of the Scriptural and Liturgical phraseology the leading idea of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, as conveying (or rather, cementing and maintaining) a close and living union with Christ, let us expand this idea in somewhat greater detail.

We are all in the most real and actual way united with the first Adam by natural generation; and, in virtue of this union, we all inherit the entail of sin, sorrow, and death. "We are in Adam, and Adam in us," is a statement of matter of fact, not involving in the least degree any theory of imputed sin. "We are in Adam;" for the child is a part of the parents, drawn out of the parents, deriving physical and mental peculiarities, if not from

them, yet from some of his remoter ancestry; and as the human race originally had one father, we are all ultimately, with all our physical and mental peculiarities, drawn out of Adam. Time was, when he and Eve stood alone in the world, and the whole human race, with all its immense varieties of manner, character, and physiognomy, was all wrapped up in that first pair.—“And Adam is in us;” to be sure he is; the parent (or other ancestor) comes out in the offspring. Adam’s openness to sinful enticement; Adam’s curiosity to know more than was meet for him; Adam’s self-willed disobedience to orders; Adam’s shame, when he felt he had done wrong; Adam’s miserable and cowardly prevarication, when remonstrated with by God,—all these features of Adam’s character are exactly reproduced in every young child of the present day, because that child is in fact a part of Adam, drawn out of him, in the last resort, though through the intermediation of a long line of ancestry. And every such child in due time suffers, toils, and dies for the same reason, that he is a part of Adam, who was doomed for his sin to suffering, toil, and death.

Now as our sin and misery comes, in the

natural order of things, by our union with (or, to phrase it differently, our participation of) Adam, so the appointed method of our salvation is by our union with (or participation of) Christ. And the union must be as real and true in the one case as in the other. The connexion with Adam, which ruins us all, bringing death into our physical, and sin into our moral constitution, is not a fictitious, imaginary, or figurative connexion, but an intense and painfully experienced reality. And our connexion with Christ must be equally real. Divines talk about the imputation of Christ's merits to us, as if such imputation were some legal fiction, by which God blinded Himself to our sins. But the imputation of Christ's merits to any soul is nothing else than the natural and necessary result of that soul's union to Him. A soul united to Christ is literally and actually a part of Christ (just as a child of Adam is literally and actually a part of Adam), and, as a part of Christ, has Christ's merits to show for itself. "He that is joined to the Lord," says the Apostle Paul, "is one spirit."

But how is this real and true union between Christ and the souls of men brought about? The first grand step in effectuating it was

the Incarnation. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity came down from Heaven, and took upon Him our nature, in its germ or seminal principle, and, in taking it, purified it from all the stains which it had taken from the Fall. He did not ally Himself (as certain old heretics¹ pretended) to a human person called Jesus of Nazareth; but took the simple

¹ The Nestorians. "If the Son of God had taken to Himself a man now made and already perfected, it would of necessity follow that there are in Christ two persons, the one assuming and the other assumed; whereas the Son of God did not assume a man's person unto His own, but a man's nature to His own Person, and therefore took *semen*, the seed of Abraham, the very first original element of our nature, before it was come to have any personal human subsistence." Hooker, Eccl. Pol. v. lii. 3. The doctrine of this passage is quite Scriptural, and expressed with great clearness and force; but it may be doubted whether the passage from which Hooker deduces it, has (in the original) the meaning which he puts upon it. Ἐπιλαμβάνομαι can scarcely mean *to assume*. It is simply "to take hold of;" and *here*, "for the purpose of rescue or delivery." The correct rendering probably is; "For it is not surely angels whom He is delivering" (by His Incarnation), "but the seed of Abraham." The word "nature" has been introduced by our translators. The original is; Οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραὰμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται. Heb. ii. 16.

nature of Man, before it had received any personal configuration. In this nature He lived a truly human life, full of human sympathies and affections, and pre-eminently full of human virtues and merits. And these virtues and merits shone forth most conspicuously in the end of His career, when His willing, meek submission to the curse which man had earned by sin, to the bodily torture, to the mental and spiritual darkness, (He alone of all men appreciating sin in its true awfulness and horror), won for us exemption from the curse.

But something more than the union of Christ with our nature is necessary in order to our salvation. It is necessary that we should be joined individually to Christ, should be made to belong to the Family, of which He is the Head; should be brought into a real connexion with *His* humanity, as we already stand in a real connexion with the humanity of *Adam*. I say, into a real connexion with the *humanity* of the Lord Jesus. To be brought into connexion with Him as God, as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, would not be what we need. He, the Lord from heaven, is the Second Man, who has

repaired the ruin of our race ; and if that ruin is to be repaired in us, we must belong to, and become part of, His humanity. And so He speaks in the text of eating the flesh, and drinking the blood, of the Son of Man, as an indispensable condition of life. There is a twofold significance in the expression “flesh and blood,” which we must not miss. First, these words are used to show us that the union is to be with His *humanity*. “*Flesh and blood*” is an expression used in Scripture, and by Our Lord Himself, to denote man,—human nature in its present state. Thus, when St. Peter is to be assured that he had received the communication of Christ’s Messiahship, and Divine Sonship, from God, not from man, the words are ; “*Flesh and blood* hath not revealed it unto thee ; but My Father which is in heaven.” And again, when St. Paul claims to have received his Gospel by direct revelation, and not through the medium of the other Apostles, the words are ; “Immediately I conferred not with *flesh and blood* : neither went I up to Jerusalem, to them which were Apostles before me.”—But there is a further significance in the fact of the flesh and blood being spoken of

in separation from one another—the one to be eaten, and the other to be drunk ; for the flesh of Christ alone, without any specification of the blood, might have served to signify His humanity. But the separation of the flesh from the blood (which, we are told in Scripture, is the life thereof) is a way of expressing death, just as we often express the same idea by the phrase spilling or shedding blood. And so, when it is said that we must eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, in order to our having life, the thought is that we must be united, not only with the humanity of Christ, but with *His dying humanity*. And this we can well understand. In His life, Christ was our Example. But an example is not all, nor indeed the principal thing, we need. In His death He is our Atonement. He “made” upon the Cross, “by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” Therefore, as it is by the Atonement of Christ that the ruin of our fall is repaired, and as the Atonement was made by His death, we must have union with Him *specifically in His death*; —we must eat His flesh and drink His

blood.—As to the words “eating” and “drinking,” they are no doubt employed to denote the closeness and intimacy of the union. How could Our Lord have expressed our union with His humanity in words more forcible? To contemplate one who stands before us is not to be united with him. To fall on his neck and embrace him is not to be united with him; for he is still external to us. But in eating and drinking, the food passes into us, and becomes identified with us; it is converted into bones, or flesh, or blood; it becomes part of the living frame.

But now, once again, how is this close union betwixt the individual soul and the crucified Humanity of Christ to be effected? The agencies are clearly revealed to us; but over the method of their operation there hangs a mystery, which we shall seek in vain to penetrate. And what wonder? Our connexion with Adam by natural generation is a patent fact which no one doubts. But who can explain this connexion, by which man is drawn out of man in interminable succession, so that each person, though distinct, is a part of his ancestor? How then can we think for a moment, to understand or explain the

method of our connexion with Christ, though it may be as certain, real, and indisputable a fact as our connexion with Adam ?

But what are the agencies which bring about this connexion ? And first ; what is the sovereign efficient cause of this union with Christ ? Holy Scripture gives one unequivocal answer. It is the agency of the Holy Spirit of God, who at the feast of Pentecost descended upon the Church, to consummate the union between God and man, which the Incarnation had commenced. In constituting the *Head* of the new Family, the second Adam, there was a signal operation of the Holy Ghost ; as it was said by the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation ; “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” And in the addition of any member to the Family of this Second Adam, the same Spirit is the prime agent, and sole efficient cause, of the result. And so our Saviour spoke to Nicodemus of being born of the Spirit, and becoming “spirit” in consequence ; and St. John the Evangelist speaks of being “born

not of blood" (i. e., not in the way of natural descent, as the Jews were, by the mere fact of their lineage, the chosen people of God) "nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

But this prime agent, the Holy Ghost, employs two instrumentalities, of different orders, in effecting the union of the soul with Christ, faith and the Sacraments. Faith, including the foregoing process of Repentance, which leads up to it, and the subsequent graces of Hope and Love, which grow out of it, He forms by His own independent agency, in the abyss of the heart. For, indeed, the idea that a being capable of exercising moral and spiritual powers, can be united to Christ *independently of the exercise of such powers*, is one of the wildest fancies which ever entered into the brain of man. The differential part of man's nature (that which distinguishes him from the lower animals) is the spirit; that is, the reason and the conscience. If we could imagine for a moment that without an action of the reason and conscience (in a being capable of such action²) a soul could

² I desire to call attention to the parenthesis, as guarding my assertion. Of course it is not intended

be united to Christ, then one of the lower animals might be united to Christ; a conclusion absurd and profane. Therefore faith must be engendered by the Holy Ghost in the reason and conscience, as an indispensable condition of the union. Yet think not that by any mere convictions of the mind, however profound, or aspirations of the heart, however sincere, man can bring himself into union with Christ. That union is a work of grace, and is to be regarded as a gift of God, not as an endeavour on the part of the soul. And it is conferred in the Sacraments, whensoever they are received with faith. Our grafting into Christ is accomplished by Baptism, a Sacrament originally administered by immersion, and, as so administered, expressing our burial with Christ, and thus our union

to deny that *infants* are capable of union with Christ in Holy Baptism. For an infant is a spiritual being, though the powers of the spirit are latent and undeveloped. A being void of spirit (like one of the lower animals) would present no point of contact to the Holy Spirit. And a being in whom the spirit acts not (though capable of acting), in whom the conscience and moral powers are dead, which is the case of a wicked or worldly adult, equally presents no point of contact to the Holy Spirit.

with Him in His death, and also our rising with Him from under the waters, which have submerged us, unto newness of life. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" But since the washing with water is external, Baptism does not either convey or express so close an union with Christ as the second Sacrament. By this Sacrament, when duly administered and duly received, is effected the closest possible union with the crucified Humanity of the Lord Jesus; and to express this closest union, the Sacramental act is that of eating and drinking the consecrated elements of bread and wine, which pass into, and are absorbed in, our living frames. The elements are not only the sign and symbol of the Body and Blood of Christ, but also the instrument of conveying, in some highly mysterious way, far above out of our reach, an actual participation in His crucified Human Nature, according to that word of St. Paul's, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?"

I seek not for a moment to understand the method, by which this mysterious union is accomplished. I feel that all explanations would be only rationalizing attempts to reduce a sublime mystery to the level of the human understanding; and that, as they involve presumptuous speculations on what God has not been pleased to reveal, they must end in mischief. The dogma of Transubstantiation furnishes an instance of one of these false rationalizing explanations. It is pretended that, by a miracle, the substance of the Elements is changed into the substance of the Body and Blood of Christ, while the appearances of bread and wine remain. Putting out of sight the unscriptural character of this tenet, (for how could that be the natural Body of Christ which He held in His hand?), and the presumptuousness of introducing into the subject a fine-drawn philosophical distinction between Substance and Accidents, questionable in itself, and quite out of keeping with the language of Holy Scripture,—we may object to it that it divests the subject of all the mystery which we should expect to hang about it. If a miracle be wrought, the effect of which is

to turn bread and wine into flesh and blood, then the mystery ceases,—every thing becomes plain and gross,—there is no longer a difficulty in understanding how “the Body and Blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.” And, on the other hand, those who maintain (with Zwingle) that the bread and wine are merely figures of our Lord’s Body and Blood, and not instruments of conveying that Body and Blood to true believers, are in another way robbing the Sacrament of all the mystery with which the words of Christ and His Apostles have invested it, and reducing it to a level with the human understanding.

There are perhaps those who think meanly of the Sacraments (and such a thought is quite in the spirit of Rationalism) because of the simplicity and homeliness of their exterior, who cannot realize that an inward spiritual grace is indeed conveyed through the medium of actions apparently so trivial and of such little account. Alas! to what would the parallel line of reasoning have led in the days of Christ’s flesh! The Incarnate God appeared upon earth as a plain and

homely man ; One who mixed Himself up altogether with the concerns and associations of daily life ; One who drew His images from nature, from agriculture, from social intercourse ; One who attended weddings and funerals, and who was found in almost every haunt of men. A plain Man in a plain dress, with none of the affected austerity of the recluse, and with no halo of glory (except on one or two remarkable occasions) round His brow. Yet, from beneath this veil of Flesh and Blood there flashed forth ever and anon scintillations of the Godhead which tabernacled there ; so that bad bold men, who came to assault Him, would go back and fall to the ground, quailing before the majesty of His mien ; and officers, sent to apprehend Him, would be irresistibly spellbound by the awful solemnity and sweetness of His words, and come away confessing their own impotence against One who spake as never man spake. The great body of the people rejected Him on account of the plainness of His exterior, supposing that the true Messiah must be characterized by some amount of outward circumstance and pretension. And He hath made His Sacraments the counter-

part of Himself, Whom they both represent and convey. What actions more familiar, more homely, than the washing of the body in water, and the reception of food? But as in Himself there was a hidden virtue, which made itself felt by the simple-minded and docile, and which streamed forth from Him continually, to heal the sick, to comfort the down-hearted penitent, and to enlighten the ignorant, so in His Sacraments also there is, for those who resort to them with the right dispositions of heart, an inward spiritual grace, a divine virtue, a supernatural effluence of comfort, light, and healing. God loves to work the grandest results by the simplest means, a law of which He gave the highest exemplification, when He sent His Son into the world, to save the world, in the circumstances of a pauper, and in the condition of a mechanic. Let us not then be staggered at the simplicity of those instruments, by which in the Church He ministers to us union with His dear Son, and all those high and priceless blessings which flow from that union—justification, acceptance, sanctification, peace, strength, light, wisdom, comfort, healing. Let us see that we open our hearts more and

more to the influences of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Let us seek to approach it with a keener hunger and thirst after righteousness, than we have hitherto experienced, longing more than heretofore for conformity to the image of Christ, and to the will of God. Let us struggle more desperately to be free from our sins, and from those cords of secular affection, which chain us down to the Earth. The Eucharist is for *aspiring* Christians; not for those who are well content to pace up and down on the same dead level of spiritual attainment, no nearer Heaven this year than they were the last. Let us seek to grow by means of it, in self-abasement, in trust, in energy of resolve. Let there be an effort, in our every reception of it, to forget the things which are behind, and to reach forth unto those things which are before. And surely, though gradually and silently, we *shall* grow; and shall be able to say of ourselves,—our consciences also bearing witness to the truth of the assertion,—“Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”



SERMON V.

The Atonement.

*“Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His Blood.”—ROM. iii.
24, 25.*

THE controversies of this day are by no means confined to the external forms of worship, or the Ordinances of the Gospel. They enter into the deepest relations of God with man, and raise here also in the very fundamentals of religion, their subtle, perplexing, and obscuring questions. You will be thankful, then, for some guidance of your thoughts on the subject of the Atonement, the great transaction of Christ on our behalf, on which all our hopes rest. May God guide us into all truth, and grant

us by His Holy Spirit to have a right judgment in this matter, for His dear Son's sake!

The text, short as it is, offers two subjects, which, though allied, must be kept carefully distinct in our minds,—the atonement itself, called here most significantly, “a propitiation;” and the mental process by which the Atonement is applied to the wants of individual sinners, “Faith.” “Whom God hath set forth to be *a propitiation* through *faith*.” Both are parts of one great idea, which is “Man's reconciliation with God.” This reconciliation cannot be without, on the one hand, the Propitiation of Christ's Blood, and, on the other, the faith of the sinner who is to be reconciled. And thus the two subjects are, as I said, very closely allied. But at the same time I think it well, at the outset, to call attention to the distinction between them. The one is *what God has done towards reconciliation*. The other is *what man must do*. The first may be, and most probably will be, beset with mystery. It may be, and probably will be, incapable of a complete and satisfactory logical explanation. We may illustrate it by analogies drawn from subjects

with which we are familiar, and which are within the compass of our experience, but probably we shall never entirely simplify or remove its difficulties. And this because, as the Prophet assures us, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways God's ways. A Divine transaction affecting the relations between God and His guilty creatures, must be, one would be prepared to expect, beyond the reach of man's limited understanding. Not so, however, what we must do, to obtain the benefit of this Divine transaction. Here a mistake might be fatal ; and consequently the known goodness of God leads us to anticipate that He would make this part of the subject as plain as the sun at noon. The necessity of the Atonement, the exact nature of it, the consistency of its vicariousness (which is one of its most striking features) with our poor narrow notions of justice, all these points the Holy Scripture never attempts to explain, because, no doubt, in our present condition of existence, they are incapable of a perfect explanation. But as to our own part in the work of reconciliation, nothing can be clearer or more explicit than the Holy Scripture. Faith, faith, faith,—faith

working by love—faith led up to by repentance, and evidenced by holiness—“this is the way,” say the Scriptural writers, “walk ye in it.” And lest any doubt should rest upon the meaning of the word “faith,” its nature and effects are copiously illustrated by examples. One long chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is devoted to no other subject than the operations of faith in the saints of the Old Testament. And the Gospels are full of accounts of sufferers or penitents, who came to Our Lord in faith, and found their account in doing so.

Is not this worthy of God—worthy alike of His goodness and His majesty,—to make *what we have to do* so abundantly clear to us, while the grand things, *which He has wrought on our behalf*, are veiled in the sublime shroud of mystery, and can only be dimly seen by mortal eye?

We have said already enough to indicate that no theory of the Atonement is traced out for us in Holy Scripture. And it is truly surprising, until our attention is called to it, how slightly and vaguely the doctrine of the Atonement is alluded to in the great Catholic Confessions of Faith. In the Apostles’

Creed, while the most explicit mention is made of Christ's Death, which is the great atoning act, the reason which called for His death, and the effects of it, are not alluded to at all in connexion with it. In the Nicene Creed, we confess that, "for us men and for our salvation" the Son of God "came down from heaven," and also that "He was crucified *for us* under Pontius Pilate;" but how His coming down furthered the end of our salvation, or what exactly the "*for us*" may import, when He is said to have been crucified *for us*,—there is not a word to explain. And the Athanasian Creed, while it draws out in great detail the doctrine of Christ's *Person*, is very cursory and brief on the subject of *His Work* and its significance, its single reference to what is called the Atonement being this general one; "Who suffered for our salvation." All this, however much it may at first surprise us, is quite in conformity with the manner of the Creeds, which is to fasten our attention on persons and facts rather than upon what are called doctrines, that thus our faith may have a firm foundation. Religious opinions shift and fluctuate, and change shapes in successive generations

of believers;—theories of the plan of salvation, struck out and proposed by the wit of man, may seem to one person satisfactory, and to another the reverse; but what God asks us to embrace by faith are things which are altogether out of the sphere of opinion and theory, living persons who exist, quite independently of our conceptions of them, accomplished facts, which no speculations of ours can alter or modify. It is a fact, an accomplished, unalterable fact, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God manifest in the flesh, died for me and for every member of the human race. And it is an equally unassailable fact that through Him there is forgiveness of sins and plenteous redemption, for me, and for every one who simply opens his heart to receive it. Let me keep these glorious facts quite clear in my mind of any theories which may be proposed to explain them. If a theologian should say, for example, that God must have some victim, to spend His righteous wrath and wreak the curses of His law upon, and that this victim was Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was substituted in our stead, to meet that wrath and endure those curses, I say, “That is an opinion of yours, which must be judged on

its own merits, and stand or fall, according as Holy Scripture, candidly and deeply studied, approves or condemns it; it is your *theory* of the Atonement, which may or may not be true,—not the Atonement itself. But what I, in common with all Catholic Christendom, thoroughly believe and receive, is *the fact* of the Atonement—that Christ was actually crucified for us all, and that through this crucifixion I (and every one else who pleases to have it) have, as a matter of fact, forgiveness of sins. The connexion between these two facts—the Death of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins—is a matter of secondary importance, and may be, for aught I know, beyond the ken of man; just as it would be quite possible for some poor boatman to know the *fact* that the tides depend upon the moon, and to use the tide-table, without having the smallest idea of *the secret* of the moon's influence. Whatever Scripture may say upon this connexion, I will accept; but I will not speculate on the subject further than Scripture leads me by the hand, because I feel that it must be above my reach."

But now, how far *does* Scripture lead us by the hand in explaining the connexion between

Christ's Death and the forgiveness of our sins; or, in other words, what is the Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement? May God enable us, while we give its full weight to every assertion of the Inspired Writers, not to venture an inch beyond their assertions!

(I) First; we will take Our Lord's own words, which bear upon the subject. He says that He came "to give His life a ransom for many;" and that He voluntarily "laid down His life for the sheep." These are figurative expressions, drawn—the one, from the practice of ransoming captives in war; the other, from the risks which Eastern shepherds often encountered, in snatching a stray sheep from the mouth of a precipice, or in defending their flocks from the incursions of wild beasts or of robbers. And because the expressions are evidently figurative, we cannot safely, I think, found upon them, or upon the like of them, any theory of the connexion of Christ's Death with the forgiveness of our sins. They are designed for devotion, not for speculation; meant to touch the heart, not to enlighten the understanding. Oh! let me press them to my heart in all their beautiful freshness, in all their consolatory power! The dear Lord,

with His own most costly Blood, ransomed me out of the prison-house of God's displeasure, in which conscience kept me a trembling, anxious captive, and brought me out into the sunlight of Divine favour and acceptance, and set me free to serve God with a disenthralled will and a glad heart.—And again ; the dear Lord so pitied me, His poor lost sheep, even when I had wandered far from His fold by sin, that, to bring me back again, He encountered the Devil and his angels, and fell a prey to those robbers and savage beasts, who were set on by the Devil and his angels,—the Pharisees and rulers of the Jews. In a burst of hellish fury they took His pure and innocent life, and all for my sake, that He might save me from the clutch of the Devil, under whose power I had fallen by sin.—The truth received thus, as simple folks would receive it, is God's precious balm for the healing of the wounded spirit. But the moment that an attempt is made to erect lively and beautiful images of this kind into a *philosophical theory* of the Atonement, the moment that we begin to say that God must be compensated by suffering for the offences of men, and that He takes Christ's Blood as an

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adequate compensation ; or that the Devil had gained a right over man, because man had wilfully sinned ; but that this claim of right has been satisfied by his being allowed to spend all his malice on Christ, who was man's Representative,—we begin to speculate with our minds upon what was given us to be embraced with our hearts, and make a very dangerous attempt to reduce inspired poetry into philosophy, or perhaps I should rather say, into logic.

(2) Dismissing, then, such terms expressive of the Atonement as are plainly figurative, and therefore upon which it would be unsafe to base any doctrine of it, let us go to the text.

And in the text, where St. Paul is speaking dogmatically and with precision, the Death of Christ is expressly called *a propitiation*: “Whom God hath set forth to be *a propitiation* through His blood.” The same expression is employed by St. John ; “He is *the propitiation* for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” And the circle of associations, into which the word introduces us, is indicated in another important place, where its cognate verb is used ; “Wherefore in all

things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make *reconciliation* (it should be, *propitiation*—*ἰλάσκεσθαι*) for the sins of the people.”

“Propitiation” is a sacrificial word, and it expresses that appeasing of the mind of a higher power, which is necessary in order to his looking favourably upon any person or enterprise, and which the ancient heathens uniformly thought to be effected by sacrifice. The same idea was taken up into the system of Jewish worship, and applied to the true God. Hundreds of animals were sacrificed by the Mosaic Law,—some, which were called “sweet-savour offerings,” for the acceptance of the worshipper, and others, which were called “sin-offerings,” or “trespass-offerings,” for the remission of his sins. And the Apostle to the Hebrews teaches us that this sacrificial system was every where typical of Christ, and has received, partly in His holy and devoted life, partly in His propitiatory death, its full accomplishment. If then Holy Scripture most expressly and unequivocally teaches us to regard Christ as a Sacrifice, it certainly

suggests the notion of Christ's work, both in life and death, rendering God propitious or favourable to us, and in some very grave and important way modifying His mind towards sinners. And the Prayer Book and Articles of our Church unequivocally recognize the same truth. The Prayer of Consecration, the greatest of all the Prayers of the Liturgy, and one in which we should naturally look for some statement of the doctrine of the Atonement, asserts that Christ "made, on the Cross, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." The second Article declares that He "was crucified, dead, and buried, to *reconcile His Father to us*, and to be a *sacrifice*, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men." The fifteenth, that "He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by sacrifice of Himself once made, should take away the sins of the world." And the thirty-first, that "the offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and *satisfaction*, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone." We

are taught then, both by Holy Scripture and our Church, to think of Christ's work for us as in the nature of a propitiatory sacrifice ; and therefore any view which does not give full prominence to this aspect of His work, which evades it, blinks it, tries to explain it away, must be a false and defective, and unscriptural, and therefore an unsound view.

But it must be observed that even in the words "Propitiation," "Propitiatory Sacrifice," we have not yet passed out of the region of figure. The Jewish sacrifices, it will be admitted on all hands, were figures or types of Christ's Sacrifice. *And in the interpretation of Holy Scripture, care must be taken not to press figures or types unduly, or to take them for more than they are worth.* There are always certain great features of resemblance between the type and the thing typified ; but if carried too far, the correspondence becomes fanciful at best, and sometimes misleading.

How much then, it may be asked, may we safely gather—(and this question goes to the very quick and core of the subject)—from the image of a propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice, under which it hath pleased God to set

forth to us the Atonement of His dear Son? God enable me to answer this question accurately and comprehensively!

God then is Love; the assertion, to our exceeding comfort, is twice solemnly made in Holy Scripture. Nothing can exceed the tenderness of the tie, which binds Him to every one of His rational creatures, who are His spiritual offspring; no affection or sympathy, of which human life gives us experience, can at all adequately express to us the yearning, self-sacrificing devotion which the Father of spirits entertains towards all the souls He has created—however far they may have wandered from Him into the mazes of sin and error. This intense love of God for human souls is the source of the Atonement, according to that word of the Lord Jesus Christ; “God so loved the world, that He sent His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

But then there are other attributes (speaking according to our conceptions), as characteristic of God, as inalienably and indefeasibly attaching to Him, as His Love. His Holiness (including under that term the

narrower notion of Justice) is one of these attributes. "Thou art the God that hast no pleasure in wickedness; neither shall any evil dwell with Thee." "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil." Seraphim, conscious only of the nothingness of creature existence, and wholly unconscious of sin, cry before Him, "Holy, Holy, Holy." It is not simply that God *is* averse to sin; but that His nature is so constituted, that *He cannot but be averse to it*. Indeed this is involved in His being Love; for sin has a tendency to ruin the immortal spirit; and can Love be otherwise than averse to that, which has a tendency to ruin the soul; and the Love of God being infinite, can the aversion of God to sin be less than infinite? Then how is God,—infinitely loving the persons of sinful men, while He detests their sins with a hatred equal to His love of their persons,—to deal with them in the way of Grace? He deals with them through the Atonement, a sublime and highly mysterious transaction, expressive to the utmost both of His love for the sinner and of His hatred for the sin,—a transaction having many features of admirable propriety, which must strike every observer, while it has

its original ground in certain relations between God and us, which it is impossible for us in our present condition to grasp. The Atonement was effected by a Person in the Godhead, and has all the incalculable value which such an agency can give to it. He took Human Nature into conjunction with His Divine Nature, and thus *atoned* (or reconciled) God and man, as the first step in His gigantic enterprise. In the creature-nature which it pleased Him to assume, He offered to the Father a perfectly holy and devoted human life—a life of perfect and intense love and purity, and therefore infinitely acceptable to Him who is Love and Purity. But in doing so, He entangled Himself in the rancorous hostility and persecution of those He came to save; and thus furnished an evidence, not only of God's willingness to save them, but of their utter alienation from God. And, as He thoroughly identified Himself with our nature, He entangled Himself also in all the distressing consequences of our sin,—hardship, pain, bereavement, death—and—what was to Him more distressing than all,—the clouding over of the soul, by the withdrawal from it of that sense of Divine favour, which is its sunlight.

But the crush and pressure of these awful trials only brought out the perfume of His graces. He was full of love still, even when stretched in agony upon the Cross, of forgiving love, restoring love, sympathizing love to man,—of acquiescing, resigned, confiding love towards God. “Father, forgive them;” “Father, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt;” “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit,”—these were the dominant chords of His state of mind, in the course of a trial, the severity of which none but Himself and God could appreciate. Now surely it is not hard to understand that such a life and such a death must have been supremely acceptable to God, and, being rendered by One who took our common nature upon Him, and appeared as our Representative, must have entirely met and discharged what I may call the demands of God’s perfect Holiness in the acceptance of sinners.

Is the vicariousness of the transaction made a ground of objection to it? While (as I have already said) we may not pretend for a moment to a perfect insight into all God’s ways, and shall do far more wisely to leave in

mystery what He does not condescend to explain to us, we may yet observe with some confidence that, make what we will of it, we are no strangers to the *fact* of vicarious suffering in our experience of daily life. Why do infants suffer pain and die? Certainly not for their own sins. Why do innocent families inherit poverty and degradation from the prodigality and unthriftiness of a parent, and innocent children an enfeebled and decaying constitution from a father who has abused his physical powers by intemperance and debauchery? You may explain these appearances, if you please, on the hypothesis that there is no God; or that, if there is, He does not busy Himself with the concerns of men; or that, if He does, He is not a righteous and impartial Ruler. But *if you are a believer in the administration of the affairs of men by a righteous God, then human life presents to you every where the same difficulty as the Atonement—the difficulty of one man's suffering for the sins of another; so that the difficulty was not originally imported by Christianity, but is found equally in what is called Natural Religion. And by a similar argument we may meet the objection, "Why*

should not God forgive, except through the medium of suffering? Here again, without professing to explain what is too deep for us, we may simply point to human life, and to the condition of things in which we find ourselves. What is there of great value, which is gained for man without toil and suffering somewhere? Have nations liberty, till patriots bleed for it? Is eminence and distinction attainable, without hardships, privations, labours? Does not the procuring of any article of comfort or luxury involve the toil of hundreds, and possibly the actual suffering of some? Children are a prize, which some persons covet. Can they be born without pain, or reared and educated without anxiety. And shall we be surprised, then, if in procuring the highest of all conceivable benefits for our race, the Redeemer should be compelled to submit to a law which seems everywhere impressed on this fallen world, and to endure the most crushing and oppressive of all trials? When to these reflections it is added that death was (as we are assured by Revelation) the divinely imposed penalty of man's sin; and that therefore any representative of man, professing to meet man's obliga-

tions, must die in order to the endurance of this penalty, we have perhaps gone as far in drawing out a doctrine of the Atonement as Scripture authorizes us in going. And even by pressing this doctrine too far, to secure what is conceived to be a logical coherence in all its parts, we shall be liable to go astray. A multitude of unworthy notions have crept into the doctrine of the Atonement, and have even been originated or sanctioned by great theologians, like Anselm, because they have sought to do what never can be done—to construct a theory, which shall be in all its parts smooth and square to the narrow understanding of men. Hence the reckless (and almost profane) assertions sometimes made—that God was angry with His own dear Son for our sakes, in whom He was always well pleased, and never better pleased, surely, than when, in the strength of love to God and Man, He was enduring the Cross; that there was an exact legal compensation in the arrangement, Christ having (according to some) gone into the place of torment¹ after His death, (accord-

¹ This view is not even yet exploded, notwithstanding the labours of Horsley. It was maintained some

ing to others) having borne in His own bosom the torments of the damned ; and that the Father (most horrible idea) delighted, not in the mind with which Christ endured His sufferings, but in the very sufferings themselves, being as a satisfaction of Divine justice.

One word in conclusion on the mental process, by which Christ's Atonement is applied to individual sinners,—“through faith.” Faith is the spiritual act, which unites the soul to Christ, and thus gives it an interest in His Atonement, just as by our union with Adam, through the medium of natural generation, we are interested in all the dismal consequences of Adam's fall. Many a soul has been saved without a clear understanding of the method of the Atonement ; but never has a soul, capable of exercising faith, and to whom the opportunity of exercising faith has been offered, been saved without faith. What can we suppose the penitent thief to have known or understood of the Atonement, though it was enacted under his very eyes? Yet, he years ago in an interesting and edifying volume of Sermons, put forth by one of the most eminent Church of England preachers in London.

believed in Christ ; and he recognized Christ's Person, when veiled under the disguise of a naked, bleeding criminal, though he could have apprehended so little of Christ's work. And this recognition was faith,—is faith still. To recognize Christ, in our very deepest convictions, as the Son of God, “able to save to the uttermost,” and also as the Son of Man, full of all human and beautiful sympathies, and having room in His large tender heart for every sinner, however grievously laden with sins, and for every sufferer, however obscure his lot ; and to be drawn towards Him by this conception of Him, so as to throw ourselves upon Him in assured confidence both of His succour and of His sympathy,—this is faith ; and faith is the saving principle now, as much as it was in the penitent thief's day. Doctrinal schemes may amuse and interest the understanding, and if orthodox, that is, if framed in accordance with Holy Scripture and the mind of the Universal Church, may do noble service, and act as bulwarks of Divine Truth ; but it is faith which saves, not doctrinal schemes, not even orthodoxy. Be we more careful to fasten our hearts upon the crucified Saviour,

than to speculate on the reasons of His crucifixion, according to those simple words of the old hymn ;

“ I cannot understand the woe,
Which Thou wast pleased to bear ;
O dying Lamb, I do but know
That all my hopes are there.”





SERMON VI.

The Stability of an Orthodox Faith.

“Stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught.”

COL. ii. 7.

THERE is no point on which, having regard to the aspect of the present times, a Pastor about to leave his flock feels more concern, than that they should be “*stablished* in the faith,” or, as the Apostle expresses it still more emphatically in the foregoing chapter, that they should “*continue in the faith grounded and settled.*”

For these are times of change and unsettlement. Thought is peculiarly active, and is constantly throwing up to the surface new ideas and new opinions. From the intrusion of these new ideas, Theology, the most stable

and most stationary (one would think) of all subjects of human knowledge, is not exempted. The religious opinions of thinking men are undergoing a gradual change, which threatens to bring them out ultimately in a different form. Every doctrine, hitherto received with implicit faith, is sifted and curiously canvassed; and the result of the sifting is, that, while some are made by it altogether sceptical, the views even of the orthodox are modified, and expressed in other words. There are two unmistakable outward signs of this change of religious opinion, which is in progress amongst us,—one an alteration of current phraseology, and the other an alteration to the outward eye in the observances of Religion. The phraseology of sermons and religious books is not now what it was at the beginning of the century; to quote one or two instances, we do not now often hear of “receiving the Sacrament,” or “going into the Church,” or being “converted,” but new forms of speech are employed to express the old ideas; and certainly, the Public Worship of the Church of England, though the Liturgy has undergone no change, wears a very different appearance at the present day from what it

did even thirty years ago. In many instances the interior of the fabric of the church has undergone an entire re-arrangement ; high pews and towering pulpits have been abolished, and the Holy Table, instead of the preacher, has been placed at the point of sight.

Where is it all to end, this fermentation of religious thought; this gradual change in religious opinion, of which there are so many symptoms? It is not only the prejudiced, the bigotted, the obstinately old-fashioned, who are uneasy on this head. The humble-minded, docile, and devout, who have really no wish but to serve their God and Saviour to the best of their lights, are beginning to fear that their lights are uncertain and misleading, *ignes fatui* dancing over a marsh, not a "lantern unto their paths," whose equable ray, if thrown in advance of their steps, may be relied upon. Is there no criterion of truth, no moral holdfast, no anchor for the mind which is tossed upon a sea of disquieting doubts? The Church of Rome, at all events, professes to supply such a criterion and such a holdfast ; and hence its attractiveness to many weak minds, who have not the moral courage to face a controversy, and also to many very

subtle and restless ones, who would be everlastingly harassed by doubts, if they could not silence them by appealing to a supposed infallible authority. But the Reformed Church of England, of which we ourselves are members,—has she no criterion of truth? no criterion of a popular description, adapted to plain people, who have neither leisure nor learning to investigate theological questions for themselves? Does our Church offer nothing to her members, by holding fast to which they may feel themselves secure against making shipwreck of their faith, amid the numerous and unsafe speculations which are abroad? If our Communion be indeed a branch of the Apostolic Church, which is declared to be “the pillar and ground of the Truth,” it must surely offer something of this kind. If so, what is it?

“*Stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught.*” There are two kinds of stability in the Faith, which are necessary to the security of the soul, and between which, although they are closely allied, we must, for the sake of clearness of thought, discriminate. There is the stability of an orthodox belief, and the stability of a surely but gradually developing

religious life. The one corresponds to the mind of man, and is to be attained by the right guidance of the judgment. The other corresponds to the heart, and is to be attained by the discipline of the affections and the will. It is only of the first that I shall have time to speak on the present occasion. The second must be reserved for my parting address next Sunday morning.

What then shall secure to us, under God's blessing, the stability of an orthodox belief? Our first instinct, as professors of the Reformed Faith, is to say that the Bible is our only safe guide, and that it will secure our orthodoxy, if we hold fast to its testimonies. But the Bible pure and simple? The Bible, *alone*, without explanation, illustration, note, or comment? Some will boldly and unhesitatingly say, "Yes!" They quote with triumph the maxim of Chillingworth, "The Bible, and the Bible *only*, is the religion of Protestants," as if it were the very charter of our spiritual liberties. They are prepared to maintain that the true religion must be received independently of man's teaching in any shape or form, that God alone teaches it

in His own Holy Book, and that from that source it may be drawn, without any human assistance, by every one who simply studies the Book in sincerity and with prayer. There is a reverence to Holy Scripture in this view, and a desire to make it the sole standard of appeal (as indeed it is) in matters of faith and practice, which, we cannot but respect. But argumentatively the position is utterly indefensible. It is impossible, utterly impossible, to maintain the independence of the mind upon human instruction, in arriving at Divine Truth! This independence may be a beautiful dream; but it is baseless as a dream; the thing cannot possibly be done. We are told that every man, under the teaching of God's Spirit, is to draw his own religion for himself out of the Bible. Assume it to be so for a moment. But who is to assure him that the Bible is trustworthy? How is he, for himself, and by himself, to arrive at the first step, that the Bible is the Word of God? Is he to take that on trust, because his father and mother tell him so, and his ancestors always held it to be so? Or is he to go for himself into the evidences of the question, and read the chief works written in vindication of the Canon of

Scripture, until he is satisfied? He may pursue either of these plans; but whichever he pursues, he is not independent of human instruction—so far from being independent of it, that his very first step in the argument rests either on the “Ipse dixit” of his parents, or upon a series of quotations from early Fathers, which form a traditional testimony to the writings of the New Testament.

But to see more clearly the futility of making the mind independent of human teaching in arriving at Divine Truth, let us inquire whether any parent, who professes to adopt the principle, has confidence enough in it to make it the basis of the education of his own child. Remember that if the principle is good for any thing, it must bear the whole stress of the following conclusion. If we are to be thrown entirely upon God's teaching in the Holy Scriptures, drawn from those Scriptures by the action of our own minds under the guidance of the Spirit, then all teaching of Creeds and Catechisms in youth, all instilment of the most elementary religious ideas, must be wrong; it gives the mind a bias in favour of the truths instilled, and so, instead of leaving it to form its own conclusions

from God's Book, pre-occupies it by human prejudice. Bring up your child, then, if you dare, on the principle that all religious instruction in childhood is to be eschewed. Develope his mind by teaching him secular things; but maintain a perfect silence as to the existence of God, the merits and mediation of Christ, the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, the efficacy of prayer. Then, when he has attained the age of twenty-one, bring forth the volume of the Holy Scriptures, and place it in his hand, and say; "You are now of age to judge for yourself, and to form your own conclusions as to the true religion. You will find the true religion in this Book, if you look for it carefully, and if you mix with your study prayer for the guidance of that Spirit, which God never denies to those who ask Him." But wait—what were those last words about the Holy Spirit? What meaning can they have for your son? . "The Holy Ghost"—he knows not whether there be any Holy Ghost; for unless you have been unfaithful to your principle of education, you have never given him the smallest inkling of this or any other religious truth. The existence of the Holy Ghost, the personality of the Holy Ghost, His

position and office in the scheme of Grace, together with all other consolatory and saving truths, he has to make out for himself from that Bible, which alone—in its grand isolation from, and independence of, human teaching—is boastfully said to be the religion of Protestants. And do you really conceive it in the least degree probable that under these conditions he will ever make out these truths? Do you think he will ever succeed in piecing together the doctrine of the Trinity out of the various texts which contain it, and that he will eventually work his way up to all the elementary truths announced in the Creeds? “Impossible,” you will reply, if you know any thing of the human mind. “It is above him altogether, however clever he may be, under those conditions. I ought to have had him baptized, and to have taught him his Creed and his Catechism; and then, when he came of age, he would have found his Creed and his Catechism in the Bible.” Ay; but in so doing you would have been unfaithful to your own principle of throwing the mind exclusively upon God’s teaching in Scripture, without any human explanation and illustration. You admit, in short, that if children are to arrive

at Divine Truth when they grow up, their parents must have instructed them previously in the elementary truths of religion.

What has been said not only serves to show the futility of attempting to communicate Divine truth independently of human instruction. It bears closely and immediately upon the point to which I am coming, and serves as a fitting introduction to that point. For in the religious education of their children, parents act as agents of the Christian Society, or (in a subordinate capacity) ministers of the Church. The charter for the Sacrament of Baptism includes (as I have often pointed out to you) a provision for the Christian education of the baptized. It comprises not only the teaching preparatory and introductory to Baptism (in other words, the preaching and catechizing of the missionary) but also the teaching subsequent to Baptism, and expansive of the seed then sown in the heart. "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; *teaching them* to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Now, where Baptism has

been administered in infancy, this subsequent teaching must in the first instance be given by parents, or those who are in the place of parents. And accordingly St. Paul charges the Christian parents in the Ephesian Church; "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but *bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*" And he urges Timothy to abide stedfastly by the principles of the education he had imbibed in childhood from his mother Eunice; "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that *from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Observe too, how in our Office of Infant Baptism the Church takes upon herself the charge of the education of the baptized, providing officers, called Sponsors, whom she binds over to see to the discharge of this important duty. "Ye must remember," thus runs the charge to the sponsors, "that it is your parts and duties to see that this infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession he hath here made by you. And that he may know these things the better, ye

shall call upon him to hear sermons ; and chiefly ye shall provide, that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health ; and that this child may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and a Christian life."

A Christian mother, then—though we may not have been in the habit of thus looking at the matter—is really and truly the first agent of the Church (or Christian Society) who approaches a child, and ministers to its spiritual wants, while it is yet of tender years. She has in truth received at the Font from the Church's great Head, under the shadow of whose wings she has come to place her infant, the same charge which Pharaoh's daughter gave to the mother of Moses, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me." It is she, upon whom the sacred charge devolves of initiating her child into Christian Faith, Christian Devotion, and Christian Practice, by teaching, (and explaining in a form adapted to his capacity), the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments.—But the time arrives, when he is to

be handed on to the regularly recognized and authorized officials of the Society, when he is to be "called upon to hear sermons," and "to be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him"—an agency, this ministerial one, of which I shall have to speak further in the succeeding Sermon. Individual ministers, however, may and do err, may be partial and uncandid in their expositions of Scripture, may blink one side of the question, while they give prominence to another, and generally may be very imperfect expositors of God's Truth. For which reasons, it is highly desirable that the Church, or Christian Society, should offer some authorized exposition of Holy Scripture, which may serve her members as a clue to the right interpretation of it. Such a document could not, of course, be expected to settle all conceivable questions which time, or the curiosity of the human mind, might give birth to; there will always be a multitude of points in Christianity not ruled (nor desirable to be ruled) by authority, left open for the opinions of devout and thoughtful men;—suffice it, if it should either explicitly or virtually contain decisions on all the graver matters of Faith and Practice.

Such a document we have, brethren, in our Book of Common Prayer, which "is to be regarded" (I quote from the late Professor Blunt, one of the most eminent English divines, whom this century has produced, and one certainly who represented the spirit of the Church of England as faithfully as any of her most distinguished sons have ever done,) "as a code of Primitive Tradition, which helps to the full interpretation of the Bible; expressing what may be there hinted; enlarging what may be there succinct; illustrating what may be there obscure; concentrating what may be there dispersed; organizing what may be there promiscuous." Every one who knows the history of the formation of the Prayer Book, and the principles upon which our wise and good Reformers proceeded in compiling it, will assent to the correctness of this description of it. There was necessarily in the primitive Church a body of traditional ordinance, traditional confessions of Faith, traditional devotions, derived from the teaching of the Apostles themselves, but not in the first instance committed to writing, perhaps lest the documents should in a period of fiery persecution fall into the hands of the enemy,

and be used against the Christians. To these traditional elements of worship, faith, and usage, St. Paul makes reference in such passages as these, "We have no such custom, neither the Churches of God;" "The rest will I set in order when I come;" "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting" (the Apostle exhorts Titus to complete the organization of the Cretan Church, which was as yet defective, under instructions no doubt received from himself); "Hold *the traditions which ye have been taught*, whether by word or our epistle;" "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye keep *the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.*" Constant manifest traces of these traditions are to be found in the early Fathers, and in the ancient Liturgies; but in process of time, (as was sure to happen in the natural course of events,) the primitive and pure worship of the Church became depraved, and the depravations showed themselves in the mediæval Service Books. Out of these Service Books the Book of Common Prayer was compiled, "the Reformers applying the criterion of Scripture, checking off the spurious parts," (to use again the language of Professor

Blunt,) writing a few of the Collects afresh, where they were hopelessly corrupt, and, with a reference to St. Augustine, who had complained of the grievous number of Ceremonies in the Church of his day, pruning down the Ritual, to make it more simple and significant. It is quite apparent from Jewel's Apology of the Church of England, that the motto of the English Reformers in their entire work was, "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the *old* paths, where is the good way, and walk therein." Their whole object was, not to cut out a new road of faith and practice, but to restore the old one, and to clear it of all the weeds, obstructions, and encumbrances, which blocked it up and impeded the passage.—The glorious result of their labours, the greatest achievement, perhaps, of any body of Theologians in any age is the Book of Common Prayer. "It is not merely a Book of national Devotion" (to quote once again from the same authority), "but an exponent of Apostolic teaching and practice. And, as such an exponent, it is seen to pronounce for the doctrine of the Trinity, the Atonement, the quickening and purifying office of the Holy Ghost, the exalted virtues of the two Sacraments, the power of

Episcopacy, and many other cardinal questions; and thus becomes a testimony calculated to set limits to spontaneous constructions of the naked text of Scripture; and to leave the Churchman, unperplexed by disputations about the *Credenda*, leisure to turn his attention to the happier province, perhaps, of doing his duty, and walking humbly with his God."

It is indeed surprising, until we come to consider it, how many moot points of controversy the Book of Common Prayer settles for us, if only we will accept it as the authorized interpretation of Holy Scripture on the ground of its embodying the testimony of the Primitive Church. To give a few instances: Does a question arise as to whether Baptism confers Regeneration; or as to whether it should be administered to infants; or as to whether our Lord alludes to this Sacrament in the famous passage, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"? The Primitive Church entertained no doubt whatever on these points; and accordingly to all and each of these questions the Prayer Book gives a very decided and emphatic affirmative.

Is there a question of the true doctrine of the Eucharist? The Prayer Book, while it expressly repudiates the notion of any change in the substances of the Bread and Wine, expressly asserts that "the Body and Blood of Christ are *verily and indeed* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper," and that "if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that Holy Sacrament, we spiritually, eat the Flesh of Christ and drink His Blood." Is the power of Ministerial Absolution canvassed? The Prayer Book distinctly affirms the power, while it discreetly limits the exercise of it, and fences it round from abuse. Is a decision sought on the amount of Ritual, which may be adopted with propriety and edification in the Church of Christ? The Prayer Book, while it by no means discards Ritual, indicates the principle of simplicity and significance, as that which ought to limit it and restrain its excesses.— And in all these points the Prayer Book is no arbitrary interpretation, put upon Scripture by the Reformers; but represents, if not with *entire* accuracy (for what human work can be free from human infirmities?) yet with sufficient correctness for all practical purposes, the

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sense of the Primitive Church. In other words, if you wish to know how the Bible was understood by the Christians who lived nearest to the Apostolic age, and among whom the Apostolic traditions still lingered, you cannot ascertain this more readily, and (on the whole) more truly, than by asking, how the Prayer Book has settled the great questions which arise out of Scripture.

To this guidance then, my brethren, I refer those of you,—(and I apprehend that in an intelligent and devout congregation they must be many)—who are feeling unsettled by the constant fluctuations of Religious Opinion. I know no better recipe for “continuing in the Faith grounded and settled,” than to cleave to the Holy Scriptures, as interpreted by the Book of Common Prayer. “Stablished in the Faith, *as ye have been taught*”—taught in childhood by parents, taught in later years by your Church, speaking to you, not only through her individual (and of course fallible) ministers, but also through her authorized formularies. I humbly submit that as, on the one hand, without the Prayer Book to develop, illustrate, and organize the scattered teaching of the New Testament, many points

of grave importance must be left open to the speculations of individuals, and no end can ever be attained of perplexing and unsettling controversies; so on the other hand, by accepting the Prayer Book as the authorized exposition and illustration of Holy Writ, a reasonable and adequate settlement of all the great questions may be obtained, quite sufficient, if not to content a curious and restless intellect, yet to guide, and calm, and secure from error, a humble and devout soul. I say, a *reasonable* settlement. For is it, or is it not, reasonable, if we are in search of the right understanding of something said or referred to in the writings of the Apostles, to go back as far as possible to the times when Christians lived, some of whom had seen the Apostles, and ask how the words in question were understood in those days? For instance, if the Scriptures leave any doubt on the propriety of baptizing infants, and you find in a writer¹

¹ Justin Martyr, quoted by Wall, on Infant Baptism. Vol. i. p. 70. Oxford, 1844.

Καὶ πολλοὶ τινες καὶ πολλὰ ἐξηκοντούται καὶ ἐβδομηκοντούται, οἱ ἐκ παίδων ἐμαθητεύθησαν τῷ Χριστῷ, ἄφθοροι διαμένονσι. "Several persons among us of sixty and seventy years old, of both sexes, who were discipled

of the second century, which had begun before St. John died, an incidental assertion that persons then living, of sixty or seventy years old, and of both sexes, had been *made disciples to Christ from their childhood*, does not that settle the question; for could the practice of baptizing children have existed at so early a date, if the Apostles had not sanctioned it?

And again, I say, *an adequate* settlement. Do not ask for, or expect, a settlement *more than adequate*. Do not imagine that God has set up in His Church a living infallible to Christ in (or from) their childhood, do continue uncorrupted."

St. Justin's word, *ἐμαθητεύθησαν*, "were discipled," or "made disciples," is the very same word that had been used by St. Matthew in expressing our Saviour's command, *μαθητεύσατε, disciple* (or, make disciples) *all the nations*. And it was done to these persons, Justin says, in or from their childhood. So that . . . the antipædobaptists . . . may perceive that, in the sense in which Justin understood the word, children may be made disciples. And Justin wrote but ninety years after St. Matthew, who wrote about fifteen years after Christ's ascension. And they that were seventy years old at this time must have been made disciples to Christ in their childhood, about thirty-six years after the ascension; that is, in the midst of the Apostles' times, and within twenty years after St. Matthew's writing.

Judge of doctrine, by whose decision all controversies are to be tried and determined. If it had been His design to establish any such authority, surely St. Paul, or St. Peter, or St. John, would have been the first persons to be invested with it; whereas these holy men uniformly condescend to prove their assertions by reference to the Old Testament, or by "commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"—thus refusing to exempt their hearers from the grave responsibility of private judgment, which indeed is a part of the probation of the human soul. Do not, then, I beseech you, be led away by any of the plausible, but utterly unsound, pretensions of the Church of Rome. God offers enough evidence of the true doctrine, to guide every humble and devout soul, and to secure it effectually against any mischievous or serious error. He gives you His own pure and perfect Word, animated by the breath of the Spirit, the only criterion of Truth, the only standard of appeal in controversies. He shows you in your Prayer Books the way in which that Word was understood and interpreted by believers, at an age when the air was still echoing with the voices of His

inspired Apostles. He shows you in the Creeds the grand fundamentals of Faith, on which all Christians are agreed, as distinct from those points on which the judgment of devout men may reasonably differ. Ask no more; and repress all morbid desire to ask for more. Quiet your mind with this amount of evidence. "The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so unquiet." "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."





SERMON VII.

The Stability of Personal Religion.

“And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”—EPH. iv. 11—15.



YOU will remember that I opened my last Sermon by referring to the general unsettlement of Religious Opinion, characteristic of our times, and to

the anxiety which is felt by a Christian pastor, in parting from his flock, to give them such advice as may tend, under God's blessing, to their stability in the Faith. We spoke last Sunday of the stability of an orthodox belief. And I endeavoured to show that this would be secured by an adherence to the Book of Common Prayer, as conveying the sense put upon Scripture, in controverted points, by the Primitive Church. But alas! there may be orthodoxy without life,—a thorough assent to correct formularies of doctrine without any experiment whatsoever of the power of true religion over the heart. And, therefore, the subject of stability and settlement in the Faith would be most insufficiently treated, did I omit to speak to you of the stability of a gradually but surely developing Religious Life. I know no topic more suitable for a farewell warning, none which I would sooner leave upon your minds as a solemn piece of parting practical advice. God give you grace to receive it in your hearts, and retain it in your memories.

Our text speaks of change and unsettlement, deprecates it, and points to the means of its removal ;—“ That we henceforth be no

more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. . . . But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things.”

The first observation, which arises upon the passage, is this, that all real stability in the Faith is through growth. How are we to avoid the being “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine?” The 15th verse answers; “By growing up into Christ in all things, while we speak the truth” (it should be rather, hold or maintain the truth) “in love.” This “holding the truth” we spoke of in our last Sermon,—it is the holding of the orthodox Faith, as drawn out of the Holy Scriptures by primitive Catholic tradition,—which tradition, as we saw, is embodied in our Prayer Book. But the qualifying words, “in love,” are far too important to be passed over without some observation. There can be no growth, but rather a counteraction and stoppage of growth, a dwarfing and stunting of the spiritual life, in maintaining the Truth in a spirit of controversial bitterness. Even if the Word of God did not say this, the spiritual mind would instinctively feel it to be true. Every one who has ever engaged in con-

troversy, knows that the atmosphere of it is most ensnaring and damaging to the spiritual life. This is not the fault of the controversy—of the earnest contention for the Faith, to which the Word of God calls us,—but of the prejudice and narrowness of the human mind, which the controversy is the occasion of calling forth, and which makes us magnify the errors of opponents, question their motives, distrust their character, and too often dislike their persons. The maintenance of Truth recommended by the Apostle is a large and loving maintenance of it, a maintenance which eschews all bitterness, faction, and party spirit,—a maintenance which is Catholic in the breadth of its sympathies, no less than in the orthodoxy of its dogmas—a maintenance, which, while it acknowledges that God is Light, and that, therefore, in Him there can be nothing akin to error, acknowledges also that God is Love, and that, therefore, in Him there can be nothing akin to hatred.

But even a charitable orthodoxy, the Apostle says, is not enough to make us stable in the Faith. We must “grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” There can be no stability in Faith, without the

growth of the individual soul whose stability is to be secured. See how wonderfully this is conveyed by the imagery which the text suggests. The imagery of instability is drawn from the waves of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," as ships, which have slipped their anchor, are carried away in a gale. Nothing can grow on the sea. To plant a tree in the sea was a Jewish proverb for the achievement of an impossibility. Whereas the broad tract of the earth teems with harvest and growing trees, trees which have a root in the soil,—not merely a foundation, like a house, but a root,—certain fibres by which they are grappled to the earth, and made secure there, though the winds of heaven should sweep across and sway their branches. So the imagery of stability is drawn from the earth and its produce; "that ye may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." My brethren, let me say very solemnly to you, in parting from you, that if you do not find yourselves making individual progress in the spiritual life, reaching forth to the things

which are before, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, there is no real guarantee at all, even for your maintenance of orthodoxy. Any specious error, which arises in the future of the Church, may seduce you in that case from Scriptural and Primitive Truth. You will fall an easy prey to any spirit of delusion which may go forth in the latter days, for the trial of the professing Church, and for the manifestation of those true members of it who are approved of God. But even if this should not happen; if your steadfastness in an orthodox profession of faith should never be shaken; of what possible avail will that orthodox profession be to you, in the day when flesh and heart are failing? If you have no spiritual growth, you lack all evidence of spiritual life; God's Truth which was given you to feed upon by meditation, and to be converted into spiritual nourishment, has been received by you merely as a dogma and a form of sound words. It has not touched your heart, quickened your affections, roused your will; can you think that it will save your soul?

But it will be admitted, I presume, that

without the growth of the individual soul, mere orthodoxy of profession can furnish no security either for our abiding in the Faith, or for our salvation. And yet it will be asked by some, "In what respects must I grow, to obtain this security? I can readily conceive that I must grow in firmness of principle, in the power of resisting temptations, in watchfulness, in self-control, in the love of man, in the love of God,—in a word, in *grace*? But is it pretended that, when my education is completed, I must also grow in Religious Knowledge; that I have any thing to learn in the Holy Scriptures, or in the Articles of Faith, with which I have not been long familiar? Improvement of the character I quite see that I need and must seek; but as an adult, who has known the Holy Scriptures from a child, and is now long past the age of learning, can I need or receive any further enlightenment of the mind?" The answer is, that St. Peter urges growth in Christian *knowledge*, as well as in Christian *principle*; "Grow in *grace, and in the knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And his words are illustrated and explained by those of St. Paul in the text. For there

the Apostle informs us that God has appointed certain means for securing the stability and spiritual growth of His people; and that these means are the ministry of His commissioned Servants, Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers. These commissioned servants are His gifts to the Church, by way of building her up, perfecting her, stablishing her in Truth, till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Not a word is said to indicate that the older members of the Ephesian Church, and those whose conversion dated some time back, had got beyond the range of this teaching of the Apostles and Prophets, and could go on by themselves without any more of it; not a word to imply that the spiritual education of any member of the Church will be completed, till the whole Church is perfected in knowledge and in love—an event to which things are tending, but which surely cannot be reached under our present condition of existence.

But as there are no longer now-a-days, "Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors,

and Teachers," at least in that form, or under those names, let us consider how St. Paul's words are applicable to ourselves; and what means they indicate to us for our own stability and growth in the spiritual life.

i. And first, it is obvious to remark, that though the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers, of the Primitive Church no longer exist, we have their testimony embalmed in their writings. St. Paul and St. Peter were Apostles; St. John was not an Apostle only, but a Prophet; St. Luke was an Evangelist; St. James the Less, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, were eminent Pastors and Teachers; and in different parts of the New Testament these inspired men yet speak. So that, as applied to our own case, the warning of the text is this;—that there can be no stability in the Faith, and none of that development of Religious Life which secures stability, without a growing study of, and acquaintance with, the Holy Scriptures. The risen Saviour "gave" the testimony of "Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers," for this very end, that His people might be "no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with

every wind of doctrine," but might maintain the Truth in love, and grow up into Him in all things. Then, Brethren, are you diligently using this means of securing your own steadfastness, amid the perils and unsettlement of the age? Are you diligent, thoughtful, devout students of Holy Scripture? I am sure that if you are, you will not for a moment aver that your minds do not receive fresh enlightenment from the study; rather you will speak with gratitude and delight of the new significance, and new beauties, which this blessed Volume is continually unfolding to your view, and of the marvellous way in which even its difficulties are cleared up in the course of your researches into it, much as a mist is dissipated on a mountain-top by a ray of sunlight. No one ever yet pondered the Word of God in a spirit of prayer and humility, who did not very speedily begin to discern in it an inexhaustible fulness of meaning—so that the mind, in a healthful state, never sates of the Holy Scriptures,—they are ever fresh, ever new. To be familiar with the chief features, and even with the phraseology, of God's Word, is one thing; and possibly our acquaintance with it in this re-

spect may not be capable of any great improvement ; but it is quite a different thing to dive into God's Word, and explore its secret treasures. We may be perfectly familiar with the outward features of some beautiful landscape,—so familiar that its beauty fails to excite our admiration ; and yet we may have no conception at all of the riches underlying that landscape, of its mines of precious ore, and its mineral springs,—“blessings of the deep which lieth under.”

I should feel a guarantee, then, Brethren, for your stability in the Faith, could I feel that you would be (not merely punctilious readers,—that I doubt not many of you are, but) devout students of Holy Scripture. The objection to this, which arises in the minds of some, is that in a busy professional life it is almost impossible to secure time for this purpose. To which I suppose no other answer can be given than that by a little self-denial, and a little retrenchment of the hours given to relaxation, or sleep, or meals, time might be made. Discipleship to the Crucified must be marked by the endurance of a daily Cross, as He Himself said ; “Whosoever will come

after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." And to people whose pursuits are very engrossing, and leave them very few corners of unoccupied time, this Cross will often take the form of sacrificing some little indulgence at the call of Private Devotion. Nor can there be any doubt that such a sacrifice would be abundantly recompensed, by the brightness and calmness of mind which it would engender. The stirring and busy character of these times, and the increased demands for work made upon every worker both in Church and State, have a sad tendency to turn us all into mill-horses, whose life is made up of an unvaried routine of drudgery; eating, and sleeping. Under these circumstances, a little quarter of an hour in the day resolutely secured for thinking over a passage of God's Word on our knees would surely repay us, by the refreshment and composure of spirit which it would bring with it.

2. But, secondly; I am reminded that, though inspired Apostles and Prophets no longer exist, there is still in the Church of Christ a living succession of Pastors and Teachers, whose commission has come down

to them from the mountain of the Ascension. It is true ; and the truth needs to have a special prominence given to it in an age when the secularity of some, and the theological views of others, both combine to pour contempt upon the Preacher's Office. On the one hand, we are scornfully told that Sermons are far behind the intelligence of the age ; that they do not grapple with the real difficulties of life and thought ; that they descend wearily and drearily upon effete dogmas, in which no one feels any interest—and a hundred complaints of that sort, made mostly by persons who will not be at the pains to listen to them. On the other hand, in the reaction against the views of half-a-century ago, which went to make Preaching the very centre of Divine Worship, and regarded the Prayers as little more than a graceful and pious introduction to the Sermon,—Sermons are now thrust as much as possible out of sight and hearing,—reduced in length (which, so long as it can be done consistently with working out the argument, is an advantage) and reduced also in the time and pains given to them, so that they necessarily become meagre and thin. This is a very serious error, and one which unhappily

finds some patrons among good and pious men. If you weaken the testimony of "the Pastors and Teachers," if you reduce it in intrinsic value, or lower it in men's apprehensions, you are striking a blow at one precious means of grace, by which God designs to secure the growth and the stability of His people. If Our Lord have really given to Christian Ministers a commission to teach His Truth, one would think it could hardly be safe to neglect their teaching, — much less to throw contempt upon the divine appointment, and to take every opportunity of speaking of it in a derogatory and humiliating manner. My own conviction on the subject is, that *no person, who has ever honestly tried to make Sermons a means of grace, has failed to find them so.* But those who come to them to be entertained by the preacher's gifts of argument or imagination, those who come to have their feelings pleasantly excited, rather than their principles deepened, those who come to them with the view of witnessing an intellectual exertion, rather than of raising the tone of their own spiritual character, are *not* trying to make them a means of grace. If a man listens attentively to one Sermon on Sunday (and one

is abundantly enough both in reason, and by the Provisions of our Prayer Book ;—the necessity of having two or three arising only from the fact that a large proportion of our congregations cannot attend the Morning Service), though it be neither eloquent, nor argumentative, nor brilliant, but simply Scriptural and sound ; if he take it home with him, and turn it over in his mind on the Sunday, and at spare intervals on week-days, and turn its good suggestions into earnest prayers, and try to frame his conduct by its practical advice, he will neither be found among the despisers of Sermons, nor among the loud-mouthed applauders of some preachers as distinct from others, but will bless God for the help and comfort derived from the instructions of His Ministers, and for the settlement and stability in the Faith, which comes from quietly and regularly imbibing their instructions.

3. But I am again reminded that some part of the Preacher's function has now devolved upon the author ; that in the times when the Gospel was first propagated, there was no press, and that, under those circumstances, men must have been thrown entirely

upon Preaching for their acquaintance with Religious Truth, which acquaintance may now be more readily obtained by private study. While we maintain that the original form, which Christ gave to the ordinance of Preaching,—the form of *vivâ voce* instruction—must be the best and most effective form, because He gave it ; and while we insist that in every argument, whether sacred or secular, you lose something, in losing the living accents of the speaker, which a printed book can never replace ; it must be admitted that there is some force in the above remark, and some instruction to be gained from it. Books of Devotion, books of Religious Instruction, treatises on special points of Faith and Practice, have often been most helpful towards spiritual growth and stability. The most fundamental principle of the Christian Ministry may be said to underlie such books ; for what is this fundamental principle, but that man should be instructed in Religion, not by an angel or superior being, but by his brother man, by one subject to like passions and like infirmities with himself, and whose heart answereth to his own, “ as in water face answereth to face ? ” Divine Truth strikes upon every

human mind at a rather different angle of incidence, no two minds being exact reproductions of one another. Books of Religious Instruction represent the angle at which Religion strikes upon the mind of the author. And when a mind of the same general tendencies is brought to bear upon such a book, the effect is very powerful and happy. The Truth comes home to the reader with a force and significance which it never had before. I would recommend, then, as one means of stability suggested by the text, the devout perusal of edifying Religious Books. Their doubtful statements will of course have to be tried (like the doubtful statements of Preachers) by the criterion of Holy Scripture. And, as with Sermons, so also with Books; if spiritual good be looked for from them, they must be used with the single aim of obtaining that good. I must read (just as I must hear), not to satisfy my curiosity, not to while away the time agreeably, not to gratify my lust after novelty, but to edify my heart. I must read therefore with prayer, and consecutively, not in a spirit of dissipation, and haphazard pursuit of any train of thought which may arise. The reader who profits will be like the

bee, which settles long on one flower, and draws out the honey. The indolent and dissipated reader is like the butterfly, which settles but for a moment, and then is off to a gayer flower or a greener spray.

To sum up, then, in one or two words, what has been said.—Stability in the Faith can only be had through growth in Grace; and growth comes to every man (adult as well as child, old as well as young) through teaching,—the teaching supremely of the Holy Scriptures, the teaching of Christian Ministers, and the teaching which may be derived from the study of good books. No man, however far advanced his state of spirituality, is beyond this teaching. No man, however ripe his years, can afford to dispense with it. It is the means of growth; and growth is the means of stability.

Finally, Brethren, farewell! My pastoral connexion with you will not cease for some little time to come; and I may hope for other opportunities of addressing you, before it terminates; but this will be the last occasion of my regular and consecutive ministry among you. At all events, we shall meet again one day before the judgment-seat of the Shepherd.

and Bishop of our souls,—I to render an account of the exercise of my ministry, you of the manner in which you have received the Word and Sacraments of God, and of the fruits which they have borne in you. I have hardly the nerve to say how deeply I have felt the constant indulgence shown by you to my shortcomings, the constant sympathy (not expressed in words only, but in kind and gracious, and often munificent acts) with my endeavours for the good of our poor neighbours; and the willingness of all to interpret me kindly, even where they could not entirely concur in my views. In short, through God's goodness supremely, and your kindness instrumentally, we have enjoyed for these seven past years a thorough sympathy and cordial good understanding with one another, which has greatly lightened the burden of my ministry in all cases, and in some has made the exercise of it a great comfort and satisfaction to me. Heartily do I wish that I could have become as intimately acquainted with all my parishioners, as I have with several of them, whose names will ever live in my memory, and be like the chiming of the church-bells of one's home, heard afar off,—a sweet music,

waking up a hundred dear and pleasant associations. But I think I can honestly say that it is want of time and strength, not want of will, which has forbidden this; and as to the numerous defects and shortcomings of the comparatively little which I have done, I must throw them upon the pardoning love of God in Christ. To that Love, which fastened on us in the counsels of eternity long ages before we were born, which in due time wrought out our redemption, and is now working out for every willing and earnest soul its sanctification, I solemnly commend you all and each. May it watch over your whole course, attend your every step, console you when you are downcast, support you when you are tried, raise you when you are fallen—and make its best and most precious manifestations to you—the good wine kept to the end of the banquet—when you are most in need of them, “in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.”



SERMON VIII.

On Preaching Christ Crucified.

“I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”—I COR. ii. 2.

WE are approaching the close of the year¹. And we are approaching also, though with a longer intervening period, the close of my ministry among you. Under these circumstances it is right for me, and it cannot fail (under God's blessing) of being profitable to you, to look back upon what has been taught in this church during the past year—nay, during the past seven years,—and ascertain how far it has been in accordance with the Apostolic model.

The text, though really one of the broadest in Scripture, has often been regarded as one of the narrowest. While it opens a vast field for

¹ Preached on Sunday, December 9, 1866.

Christian Preaching, a field so vast, that there will always remain (even at the close of the longest ministry) corners of it unexplored, it has been looked upon too often as confining that preaching to a very limited ring-fence. For it has been held to condemn the discussion from the pulpit of all topics save one—that one being the doctrinal statement of the method of human salvation, in the terms to which the theology of the Reformers (in its leading outlines most Scriptural and most true) gave a popular currency. The effect of this misapprehension of the Apostle's meaning has been disastrous enough. It has robbed Christian Preaching of its interest and freshness, and has substituted monotony—a constant irksome repetition of the same note—for harmony. The Sermon has been time after time substantially the same; and the only variation has been in the text. But surely the Holy Scriptures give no sanction whatever to the principle of such teaching—or rather condemn it very emphatically. There are parts of the New Testament, like the Epistle of St. James, which contain scarcely any explicit and express reference to what is called, in the *narrow* sense, Christian Doctrine,

and yet which we believe to have been given—equally with other parts—by inspiration of God ; while, taking a general view of the whole of the Bible, we are obliged to confess that one great distinguishing feature of it is the variety of form in which its lessons are offered to us. The Bible teaches us by its histories, by its maxims and apothegms, by its prophecies, by its strictly devotional pieces, by its epistles,—there is scarcely any form of literature,—poetry, history, biography, moral philosophy, correspondence,—of which the Bible does not contain some specimen. If the Holy Spirit be so diversified in His form of teaching, it cannot surely be intended that the human ministers, who are to act under Him in edifying the Church, are to state the Truth always in one and the same form, and to make the minds of the hearers travel always in one and the same groove of thought.

But although we cannot so understand the words of our text, as to preclude variety in the topics of Christian Preaching, there can be no doubt whatever that in that variety, and underlying it, there must be a thorough unity—a unity caused by the felt presence every where,

in every Sermon, of "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Unity in variety is the law which obtains every where in God's works. Leaves of trees, various as they are in colour and shape,—various even in the case of leaves of the same tree,—are all formed on the same type. The structure of animals of widely different habits, and of different elements, is yet found to have one great common feature in the vertebra. Unity in variety is the law which obtains also in God's Word, the Holy Scriptures. For varied as are the styles of the sacred writers, and the species of literature contained in the Bible, we have Our Lord's express assertion that Moses wrote of Him, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament testify of Him, that things are written concerning Him in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, all of which must be fulfilled. And there must therefore be a real and deep-seated unity in this respect between the Old and the New Testament, the Old Testament testifying darkly, and in an undersong, of a coming Christ, the New Testament brightly and aloud of a Christ who is come.—Nor do I think that any thoughtful and devout reader of the Bible will fail to perceive that, widely as its contents

differ from one another on the surface, it is yet one book, not only as testifying, in all its parts, of One Saviour, but as written under the inspiration of One Spirit. And hence the possibility of making copious apposite references from one part of the Bible to another part, very remote from it in date and style,—a very remarkable feature of the Inspired Volume, and one of which no satisfactory account can be given, unless it be admitted that the Holy Spirit of God pervades the entire volume, and organizes every member of it into a living whole.

As then there is unity in variety in the works and Word of God, there should be unity in variety in Christian Preaching also. And the unity stands in the central object of Christian Preaching, which must colour every topic introduced into it,—“Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Speaking from a general survey, the topics of Christian Preaching reduce themselves to three. The preacher may speak of the doctrinal part of Christianity, or of its devotional observances, or of its precepts. The doctrine of the Gospel is Jesus Christ, and He crucified. And as to its ritual and its precepts, they must not be preached indepen-

dently of Christ Jesus, and Him crucified, but in living connexion with Him.

I shall now show how St. Paul's practice, as indicated in his Epistles, illustrates his determination, as announced in the text.

I. His doctrine was this; "Jesus Christ, and He crucified." Observe narrowly the way in which St. Paul states the subject of his preaching. He does not say, "I determined not to know any thing among you save *the doctrine* of the Incarnation, or *the doctrine* of the Atonement, or *the doctrine* of the Trinity," though these doctrines were of course involved in what he preached; but he says, "I determined not to know any thing among you but" a certain great Person, and a certain great fact—"Jesus Christ," that is the certain great Person,—“and Him crucified”—that is the certain great fact, which befell the certain great Person. What is propounded to Christians for their faith, is not a *sentiment*, or *an opinion*, or *a view*, (this is what the old philosophers, wise in the wisdom of this world; propounded to their disciples; they maintained a thesis respecting the constitution of the universe, or respecting the nature of the Gods, or respecting moral truth, and the grounds of

human duty, which some people might think just and accept, and others might question and dispute;) but a Person, who, having existed before all worlds, came into the world,—and an incident, or rather series of incidents, which befell this Person. When St. Paul describes the Gospel which he had preached to the Corinthians, he reckons up as the constituents of it three incidents in the career of our Blessed Lord, which have been recorded by all the four Evangelists; “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that *Christ died* for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that *He was buried*; and that *He rose again* the third day according to the Scriptures.” You see that the Gospel which St. Paul preached is a Gospel, not of questionable theories, or disputable opinions, but a Gospel which stands in facts befalling the Person of Christ—“He died for our sins;” “He was buried;” “He rose again the third day.”

In the text he states the same thing in a more fully developed form—first the Person, “Jesus Christ;” and then what befell Him,—“He was crucified.” And we may be thankful for this more fully developed form of

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statement ;—it shows so clearly the order in which Christian Truth should be presented to the mind,—first, the Person of the Saviour,—then His work, which derives all its blessed efficacy from His Person. Nothing is more common in modern theology than to lose all thought of the Person of the Saviour in His work. While spiritual selfishness reigns supreme in our hearts, while the one engrossing solicitude is, “What must I do to be saved?” it cannot but be that Christ’s work shall be valued more than His Person. It is His work that saves us ; His Person is nothing more than the object of devout contemplation, which draws out all the wonder and adoration of the Christian soul. But the New Testament, and the great Apostle St. Paul, teach us a totally different lesson. The Gospels exhibit to us, in the first instance, *the Person of Christ*. He is the Son conceived by Mary of the Holy Ghost, according to St. Matthew ; the Son of God, the latchet of whose shoes John the Baptist was not worthy to stoop down and unloose, according to St. Mark ; the Son of God, conceived by “the overshadowing of the power of the Highest,” according to St. Luke ; the Word,

who was God, but who "was made flesh, and dwelt among us," according to St. John. And not until they have laid this sure foundation in the doctrine of Christ's Person, do they proceed to the details of His life, death, and resurrection, which all borrow their efficacy and their significance from His Person. A great lesson to us in every way. For it teaches us *that the central object of faith is a Person, rather than a transaction.* To believe the Gospel is to repose a living trust in the Saviour Jesus Christ, a trust grounded on His omnipotence and all-sufficiency as God, and on His sympathy and tenderness as Man. When once we are rooted and grounded in the doctrine of His Person, this excludes all doubts as to the sufficiency and availableness of His work. Our sins? Cannot the Blood of the Son of God expiate them? His willingness to receive us? Has He not already come down from Heaven, and taken upon Him our flesh, with the gracious purpose of winning our hearts?

But how is it that in our text the Resurrection finds no place; no place, as one of the main topics of St. Paul's Preaching? How is it that he does not say, "I determined not

to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, and *risen*," when we find from another part of this Epistle that the Resurrection of Christ entered so largely into his teaching? The answer is, that the Resurrection is implied, though not expressed. "I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." But how? did he really mean,—*could* he mean, that he proposed to the Corinthians, as the great object of faith, a Man who had passed away a quarter of a century before he wrote to them, and who was now no more? Impossible. To believe in Jesus Christ available, cannot be to receive on historical evidence the fact of the crucifixion, as a mere event of history. It must be to believe in, and look up to a present Saviour;—a Saviour who lives now after the power of an endless life,—a Saviour who, having ascended up far above all things, now fills all things with His Presence. And if He now lives so, and yet once died, He must have broken the bonds of death, and come forth more than conqueror from the grave.

II. But see, next, how the devotional observances of Christianity, as St. Paul preached

them, and as therefore we ought to preach them, are pervaded and coloured with the doctrine of a crucified Christ. The ritual of Christianity is extremely simple; and it is so constructed as to keep Jesus Christ and Him crucified continually before the minds of those who observe it. This ritual consists of two Ordinances called Sacraments, defined by our Church to be "outward visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace."

(Just observe, by the way, the correspondence of ordinances so constructed with the Person of Our Blessed Lord. Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh—manifested once, and hereafter to be again manifested, to the senses of mankind. His human body, soul, and spirit was a tabernacle, which enshrined His Deity. Now in each Sacrament there is a divine part, coming from God alone, and consisting in a communication of the Holy Spirit to the soul; and also an earthly and material part, operated by man,—water sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin, bread and wine consecrated into a symbol to represent, and into an instrumentality to convey to the faithful, the Body and Blood of Christ. The twofold element of each Ordinance is con-

ned by a deep-seated relation, which, in all probability, we cannot fully understand, with the twofold nature of Him who instituted it.)

But setting this apart, what truth, according to the teaching of St. Paul, do the two Sacraments set forth? St. Paul, I may observe, whatever his professing followers and imitators may teach, is rather full upon the Sacraments, and developes far more explicitly the significance of each of them, than the three first Evangelists, who record their institution. What saith he of Holy Baptism? In order to apprehend the full force of his words, it must be remembered that the method of administration, to which he alludes, was the submersion of the entire body of the person receiving the Sacrament under the water, for which moment animation would be suspended, and the raising of it again into the air, when animation would be restored. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into *His death*? therefore we are buried with Him by baptism *into death*; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even

so we also should walk in newness of life." And again: "*Buried with Him in Baptism*, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." Do you not see here, how the doctrine of Christ's Death pervades and colours the Sacrament of Baptism, nay, gives to the Ordinance its very form? The water closes over the person of the baptized, as the grave closed over the form of the crucified Jesus; but just as that beloved form re-appeared from the grave on the third day, so in Baptism, rightly administered and rightly received, there is not only "a death unto sin," but "a new birth unto righteousness."

The connexion of the Lord's Supper with the Death of Christ is still more obvious, and avowed by the Apostle with still more explicitness; "The Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread: And when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat; *this is My Body which is broken for you*: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, *This cup is the New Testament in My Blood*; this

do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, *ye do show the Lord's death*, till He come."

In this second and higher Sacrament, the Death of Christ is symbolized in great detail. Bread, the staff of life, made by the artificial process of bruising in the mill, is a most apt emblem of Him, who was "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," and whose redemptive work is essential to the support of the soul. Wine, the fruit of the vine, produced by pressure of the grapes, is an equally suitable emblem of Him, who trode for us all the winepress of God's wrath. The bread and wine, exhibited and received in separation from one another, as they are in the Eucharist, point to *the Death of Christ*, inasmuch as death is the separation of the body from the blood, which is the life thereof. Finally; the intimate union of food with the human frame, an union so intimate that in a few hours the food becomes part of the frame, is a most significant representation of the spiritual union between the great Head of the Church, and the members of it, in virtue of which He identifies their cause with His, and

says to the persecutor, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me?*" and to the neglecter of works of love; "I was sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not." We may say then, summarily, that the first Sacrament serves to convey, and the other to maintain, union with Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; while the Lord's Supper symbolizes the Death of Christ with a very explicit significance. And it is quite noteworthy how the Apostle Paul does not preach these Sacraments independently, but connects both one and the other with the Death of His Master.

III. And now, finally, remark how the preceptive part of the Gospel has precisely the same colour,—how here again the thought of Christ's Death is present and pervasive, at least in all the deeper and more comprehensive precepts.

And here we cannot fail of being struck with the difference between the precepts of mere morality, and those of the Gospel of Christ. The virtues in human systems of moral philosophy are set forth independently of one another, and in severance from any common root, which gives life and vigour to all of them. Justice, and temperance, and

chastity, and benevolence, and humility, are described and recommended; and there the matter ends; the different forms of goodness are not traced up to any one principle. But the Apostles, and especially the Apostle Paul, go more profoundly into the subject. They teach that if any virtue is to be exercised, the hindrance to it must first be taken out of the way; that this hindrance is a corrupt nature, to which, in their vivid apprehensions of it, they sometimes give a personal name, calling it "the old man," "the body of sin,"—appropriately and most instructively so named, because, though the body has sundry members, one life pervades it; and though sin acts in divers ways, it has only one actuating principle. Now how do they teach us that this hindrance is to be put away? What is to be done with this corrupt nature, this old man, this body of sin, which is also a body of death? It is to share in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The old man is to be nailed up alongside of Him, and made to bleed to death by a slow and agonizing process of torture, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His

Resurrection ; knowing this, that *our old man is crucified with Him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do *mortify the deeds of the body*, ye shall live." "*Mortify*, therefore, your members which are upon the earth ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." "They that are Christ's have *crucified the flesh*, with the affections and lusts." But why do I quote only the words of an Apostle ? they are but an echo of the great rule, which his Master laid down for the practice of Christian virtue ; "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and *take up his cross daily*, and follow Me ;" "If any man come to Me, and hate not" (mortify not his natural instincts to such an extent, as *to hate in comparison of Me*) "his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever *doth not bear his cross* and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." So that both Our Lord and His Apostles make the grand rule of disciple-

ship to be a bearing of the cross, by mortification of the natural instincts ; in other words, a transference into the Christian's spiritual experience of the Lord's own Crucifixion, which was transacted openly upon the stage of the world.—Let me pause for one moment to ask whether the goodness which we imagine to be in us, wears at all the complexion of mortification and crucifixion ? Is it a denial of self, a sacrifice of self in any shape ? Or is it merely, as the goodness of so many professing Christians is, the following of the natural bent of an amiable and kindly temper, wherever such temper is not thwarted by any cross circumstance, or soured by any trial ?

Such then (to draw these remarks to a conclusion) is the preaching of Christ crucified. It is not the dwelling incessantly upon a single topic, or a single scheme of doctrine ; but rather it is the presenting every topic presented in the Bible, (be it ordinance, or precept,—be it the ritual of the Old Law, or its histories, or its devotional pieces, or its maxims of policy,) in the connexion which all these things have—in some cases a latent,

in others a patent connexion—with the great absorbing object of the Christian's interest and the Christian's adoration, "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." Nor can this be effected by any mere attempt to effect it, made on the ground of such attempt being right. It cannot be done by care and caution in the choice of subjects and the composition of sermons; it can only be done by the presence of the crucified Jesus in the heart of the preacher, in which case, however little explicitly he may on occasions speak of the Saviour, he will ever be glancing towards Him in his discourse. The glance of the eye may sometimes indicate more love of the person glanced at, than the most elaborate panegyric pronounced by the lips could do. And in sermons where Christ and He crucified are glanced at, out of the fulness of a heart which sincerely loves Him, the presence of the great theme will certainly make itself felt. The structure of our great Churches and Cathedrals is cruciform; their ground-plan is in the shape of a Cross; and we feel this arrangement of the building instinctively, as soon as we enter them; it needs not that there should be a cross ensconced in every

niche, or surmounting every arch. And if Christ and Christ's Cross have been wrought into the very platform of a preacher's mind, and form the very stamina of his own inner life, there is no fear but that the precious odour of the great Name will transpire as often as he preaches. Sometimes, to assume Christ's atoning Death, and argue on the assumption (which is what St. James does), will be more effective than the explicit announcement of it with St. Paul.

Brethren, I have honestly *tried*, during the last seven years, to conduct my ministry among you on the principles, which it has been the business of this Sermon to explain. I can say no more than that. I have understood the theory, and I have endeavoured to give it effect in practice. Had my own heart been more full of Christ, and more penetrated with the great things of His salvation, than it has at any time been, I should have done infinitely better, and failed much less often. Your prayers will, I trust, second mine, that my shortcomings, as they affect myself, may be forgiven me, and, as they may have affected you, may be supplemented by the grace of the Holy Spirit. But I should not

be faithful, if I omitted to remind you that for such portions of the Truth as have been fairly (even though feebly) set before you, you all share my responsibilities with me. A neglected message makes the case of him who neglects it, worse than if he had never received it. The ministry of the Gospel, wherever it is not a savour of life unto life, becomes a savour of death unto death. And in such a case those awful words of the Lord to the Prophet Ezekiel find their miserable fulfilment; "If thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."





SERMON IX.

The Responsibility of Hearers.

“Take heed therefore how ye hear.”—LUKE viii. 18.

IN St. Mark's Gospel this precept is given in a form slightly different ; “Take heed *what* ye hear.” But both Evangelists introduce it in exactly the same connexion, as a lesson deduced by Our Lord, from the parable of the Sower, immediately after He had explained that parable. It is as if He had said ; “This parable shows that you must exercise great circumspection in hearing the Word of God. It is by no means enough to place yourself under the preacher, and listen to what he says. Since on three out of every four hearts the Word does not thrive ; since on the hard heart it is not retained, on the shallow heart it finds no root, and on the heart not cleared of the cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, its growth is

strangled,—you must see that you get your heart in order, before you listen to it.”—As to the difference of meaning between “Take heed *what* ye hear,” and “Take heed *how* ye hear,” it is not material. The “how” embraces the “what.” He who is generally circumspect in hearing the Word of God, will consider not only the temper in which he listens to it, but also the message which he receives as from God. He will be careful in the choice of a preacher or of a spiritual book, as well as careful to listen, or to read, in the right frame of mind.

On this Sunday¹, when in most of our Cathedral Churches the quarterly Ordinations are going on, many remarks will be made from the pulpit on the responsibility of those who are called upon to *preach* God’s Word. Most solemn and awful that responsibility is ; and well might any man decline to undertake it, if he were called upon to do so in his own strength. But there is a correlative responsibility, bound up with that of preaching, of which my text leads me to speak, and with which alone those whom I address have any

¹ This Sermon was preached on March 17, 1867, the Second Sunday in Lent.

concern,—*the responsibility of hearing.* And we may understand “hearing” in so broad a sense, as will make it applicable to times when part of the preacher’s functions are fulfilled by the religious writer; we may regard the warning, “Take heed how ye *hear*,” as equivalent to, “Take heed from what source, and in what temper of mind, ye seek and receive religious instruction.”

The first remark which arises out of the text is, that there is scarcely any precept of Our Lord’s which, as a general rule, is less observed by His professing followers than the one before us. Persons who have a character for piety, whose lives are unimpeachable, and their attendance upon religious ordinances punctual, are nevertheless for the most part singularly careless both as to the temper in which, and as to the sources from which, they receive religious instruction. They give not a thought either to *what* they hear, or *how* they hear. They go to listen to a preacher, or glance over the first religious book which is put in their hands, as lightly and unconcernedly, as if responsibility attached exclusively to the teacher, not at all to the taught. Some doubtful religious teaching

is abroad, which awakes public attention, and makes a noise in the world. Some new-fangled views are ventilated by a preacher, or broached in a book ; and the first question asked in every circle, a question which proves a windfall in the matter of conversation, is, "Have you heard this preacher? have you seen this book?" Under such circumstances religious people will go to listen to the questionable preacher, or send to their publishers for the questionable book, without the smallest scruple of conscience ; and that with the full knowledge that grave objections may be advanced against the teaching which they propose to submit to, and that they themselves are extremely ill-furnished for religious controversy. Surely this is a great presumption, and one which has been heavily visited on many who have been guilty of it. In the teeth of Our Lord's precept, that we should exercise circumspection as to how and what we hear, religious people will listen to shrewd Roman priests, or take up sceptical books, which insinuate doubts, until they are inveigled into an agreement with the plausible doctrines which they hear or read. And often they have no better motive than

curiosity, and a lust after novelty, and an impatience of well-worn and well-established truths.

Again ; the many opportunities of receiving religious instruction, which are now-a-days furnished, have a tendency in themselves to make persons volatile in hearing. Not to speak of the attempts at "revivals," which are now made in many of our towns under the name of "missions,"—an enterprise which may do good service in arousing the torpid, and alarming the careless, but is by no means equally useful in edifying the earnest-minded and devout,—not to speak of these,—almost every church in our larger towns has its series of special Sermons in Lent, often by preachers of very different schools and habits of thought ; and as for religious literature—in all its *shapes*, periodical, and occasional, sermons, tracts, treatises, and in all its *qualities*, sound, shallow, flippant, questionable,—it is now-a-days spread so widely, that persons are liable to be distracted by the variety of it.

Now this very cheapness and commonness of religious instruction has often the effect of leading astray well-meaning but inconsiderate

persons. They seem to be under an impression that they cannot hear and read too much that is good, and they fly from church to church, from book to book, without seriously questioning themselves as to whether they are making any real mental and spiritual growth. There is no time to pray and think over one Sermon, and compare it with Holy Scripture, and found upon it a good resolution or two, before another comes and drives it out of their head. This is not taking heed *how* and *what* they hear; but rather hearing all things promiscuously, and nothing for long together. Such persons do not consider that mental and spiritual food is subject to the same laws as bodily,—that in both a very large quantity and a very great variety overtaxes the powers of digestion, and is positively prejudicial to health.

But even when religious persons confine themselves very much to the instructions of their own regular pastors, and of books approved by long experience, and when those instructions are thoroughly sound, how very seldom have they any sense of responsibility in hearing,—any feeling that without care and preparation on their part, the truths which

they receive will not be attended with profit. How many Christians are apt to limit their responsibility in Church to the prayers. In the prayers they know that it is their duty to join, with fervency, if possible, at least with the utmost seriousness and solemnity of mind,—they would tax themselves in their next self-examination, if they found this had been left undone. But with the commencement of the sermon they seem to have an idea that their responsibility ceases; that they may listen to it languidly, or scarcely listen to it at all, without sin; but that, if attentively listened to, it is certain to do them good, independently of their present state of heart. How few have taken in the simple thought that, just as sowing will not in itself produce a harvest, without a previous preparation of the soil on which the seed is to be thrown, so the Word of God will not in itself engender in us the fruits of the Spirit, unless the heart be brought into a receptive state. Who ever thinks, in these days, of seriously preparing himself to hear a sermon, of seeking to thrust out worldly cares and thoughts, and of praying earnestly for himself, and for the preacher, before it begins? Who ever thinks, after the

sermon is over, of nursing it in mind and heart, founding prayers and resolves upon it, shaping his life and conversation during the week upon the maxims which it has inculcated.

We have seen now how generally our Lord's precept in the text is neglected, and have thus prepared ourselves for the consideration of the next point, which is, how it may be observed.

I. In the first place, a rule should be made never to seek any questionable religious teaching (however brilliant and fascinating to the intellect) out of mere curiosity. Cases may of course arise, in which it becomes a duty for some to examine such teaching, and to expose what is faulty in it; as, when some members of a congregation are in danger of being misled by a newly-broached error, it is incumbent upon their spiritual guide to gain such a mastery of the subject, as may enable him to answer the arguments by which they have been misled. The way of duty, although it may be in itself a way of danger, will yet be a way of safety to one who walks in it out of a sense of duty. If it be asked how we are to know what is questionable in

religious teaching, and suggested that, after all, what seems questionable on a first view may prove true and right on further acquaintance,—I can only reply that, now that Christianity has been so long in the world, has elicited so many controversies, and has been so largely discussed, the *prima facie* evidence is against any *new* opinion, however ingenious, and however ingeniously advocated. In the mind of every well-educated and devout Christian, there is a certain instinct, which puts him on his guard against dangerous novelties and plausible theories, and warns him to abide by those principles which his religious education has firmly established in his mind. And this instinct is not prejudice, or bigotry, but most reasonable. To what purpose has Christianity gone through and survived so many terrible ordeals, if those ordeals have established nothing, settled nothing, closed no questions? Is it at all likely that the Holy Scriptures should have been canvassed and sifted for 1800 years by many of the subtlest and ablest minds which the world has ever produced, and that something materially modifying our faith and practice has escaped

them all, and still remains to be discovered? Heretical novelties there have been many, which unhappily have had a run in their day, and have drawn away disciples after them; but they have all collapsed and disappeared, one after another, and have left a well-established residuum of Truth, which the believer by this time is quite warranted in regarding as unassailable.

II. The second rule must be, to imbibe religious truth gradually, and not to overburden the mind with more of it at one time than we can digest. A little studied, and pondered, and reduced to practice, is vastly more advantageous than a great deal, and a great variety, superficially received.

Our Church it must be remembered, provides but for one sermon on Sunday, showing, I apprehend, thereby what is her judgment as to the amount of religious instruction which ought to suffice for the week. While a necessity arises for at least two sermons a Sunday, from the circumstance that very many members of our Congregations are unable to attend Church in the morning, it ought to be distinctly understood and maintained that, for those who can and do attend

twice, one sermon would be much more advantageous than two. More advantageous, first, because the minister would have more time to spend upon it, and thus it would probably be a better sermon. More advantageous, secondly, because it would not distract the mind with a variety of topics, but would leave it concentrated during the week upon one definite point. And the same principle may be applied to devotional reading. A variety of spiritual books, and a diffusion of the mind over too large a surface even of the same book, is not found to be profitable. The bee settling for some time upon a single flower, to extract its sweets, makes honey. But the butterfly, alighting but for a second, and then flying off to a gayer flower or a greener spray, lays no flower under tribute, collects nothing from any. One author, till he has been read through, and read through with annotations of the mind, if not of the pencil ; one sermon, carefully considered during the week, and collated with the Scripture from which it professes to be drawn,—this is the way to profit, under God's blessing, by the religious author, and the religious teacher.

III. Thirdly; In order to a circumspect receiving of God's Word, the mind must be prepared in the first instance, before we hear or read it. This is done in two ways,—by prayer, and by a few minutes' recollection or consideration.

We should pray, before listening to a sermon, both for ourselves, and for him who is to deliver it, for him, that he may rightly divide the word of truth,—for ourselves, that God would “give us increase of grace to hear meekly His Word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.” How completely would such a prayer, if offered from the very depths of the heart, bar all curious as well as all listless hearing, and all censorship of the preacher. If sermons were always approached in a spirit of prayer, how many of them which are now quite barren, would become powerful means of grace, however indifferent they might be as compositions.

Secondly; a grave responsibility, like that of hearing God's Word, must be approached of course, with *consideration*. Perhaps the readiest way of giving this consideration, for ordinary people, would be to read over the

Parable of the Sower, with Our Lord's exposition of it, and to question ourselves upon the points, which it raises,—the impressibility of our hearts, which is necessary to the sinking in of the seed; the seriousness and depth of our character, which is necessary to a permanent impression; and our freedom from worldly cares and lusts, which is necessary to the healthy development of the seed. Or, some other passage of Scripture on the same topic,—as, St. James's exhortation "to receive with meekness the engrafted word,"—quietly read over, and personally applied, might answer the same purpose.

Next; as to our conduct during the actual hearing or reading. It must be clearly understood that no spiritual profit can be obtained by passivity and a mere matter-of-course acquiescence. The mind must be active in hearing or reading; or in other words, an effort must be made to attend closely to what is said, and to retain it in the memory. How many think it quite sufficient to sit back and listen, the outward ear open, but the mind never exerted even for a moment.

Finally; as to the method of nursing the seed, after it has been received. Our Lord

speaks of birds of the air as removing it,—a significant image of the little airy nothings, the casual gossip, the morning visit, the passing levity, which carry off and rob us of, first one, and then another, of the holy lessons we have received in God's House. The effect of these might be counteracted, if a certain small portion of time every Sunday were devoted to the recollection and re-arrangement in the mind of what had been heard, with a view to its consideration and personal application.—As for consideration, the method of it is all summed up in one word, "thought." Of the many sermons we are in the habit of hearing, and perhaps of listening to, how very few are made the subject of subsequent thought! And this is the case, even where a sufficient amount of attention has been exercised, to secure in the *memory* the points of a sermon. Even then, there may have been no balancing in the thoughts of what has been heard, no inquiry into its correspondence with Scripture, no attempt to strip it of its theological phraseology, and ascertain its true meaning and bearing upon ourselves, no prayer to abide by it, when proved, no effort to work it into the texture of the will and character.

Perhaps it may be alleged that, whatever may be the case with religious books, preachers generally give us but little matter to think of. And this is unhappily more or less true. But then it must be remembered that for the shallowness of sermons congregations are in great measure responsible, as well as their Pastors. In the markets where Truth is sold and bought, as well as in those for perishable commodities, demand almost instantaneously creates supply. Bring a vapid and indolent preacher into a congregation of hungry souls, and if he has any thing in him, he immediately feels that he must be vapid and indolent no longer. There can be no greater stimulus to a minister of God's Word than earnest looks and longings for spiritual help among the people. And in proportion as he gives them sound and Scriptural materials for edifying thought, their appetite for such instruction rises. And in proportion as it rises, is he stirred up to gratify it. Thus minister and people mutually re-act upon one another for good. There are few more certain sequences of cause and effect in nature, than that, where the maxim of the people is, "Take heed how and what ye hear," the maxim of the

minister will be, "Take heed how and what ye preach."

Brethren, much as I owe to you for the kindness which you have shown me in the course of my ministry, and for the sympathy whereby you have made my most difficult duties light and even pleasurable, I owe you much more for the stimulus which your requirements have given to my exertions. I have met in private with so many cases of reality of religious feeling; I have been so often asked for counsel, where the soul was evidently deeply earnest in seeking after it; and in public I have seen such evidences of avidity to receive the message of Divine Truth, that it was impossible not to respond to such sentiments,—impossible not to exert oneself to the utmost to give the required help. You have placed a full strain upon me, and have drawn out, not more by your indulgence, than by your expectations and demands, all the little that was in me. And in doing so you have taught me perhaps more than I have taught you; for it is out of the question that a man can really minister to souls (as distinct from professing to minister to them), without being himself infinitely the

gainer, in the way both of knowledge and edification. To you, then, who have shown so much earnestness in hearing, I may commend these directions how and what to hear, with a perfect confidence that they will not be thrown away, but turned to practical account. Religious thought in England has undergone great changes of late, and will probably take many new and strange forms hereafter. Do not go after the fleeting fashions of the day; but abide stedfastly by that which is well-known and well-approved in faith and practice. Give not your ear to novel theories, which have neither the Scripture, nor the traditions of the Universal Church, to recommend them. Do not seek after a religion of lively impressions and quick susceptibilities (this is the root of the evil); but rather after a religion of growing principle. The stimulus applied by God's Word to the soul, is not the stimulus of galvanism, but of solid nourishment. Receive religious teaching with a deep feeling of seriousness, and of the grave responsibility which it lays upon him who receives, no less than upon him who communicates it. Hold before you constantly the great truth that where there is no life, there is no growth;

and that growth is not made by fits and starts, by excitements and impulses, but by taking in, digesting, and assimilating suitable nourishment. You will be safe, if you are growing ;—safe from the fatal mistake, made by so many, of confounding interest about religious questions with interest in religion. Therefore “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” And God, the giver of the increase, whose grace alone is the cause of all spiritual fertility, fulfil to you His gracious promise, made by the mouth of His Prophet ;—

It will be as the dew unto Israel.

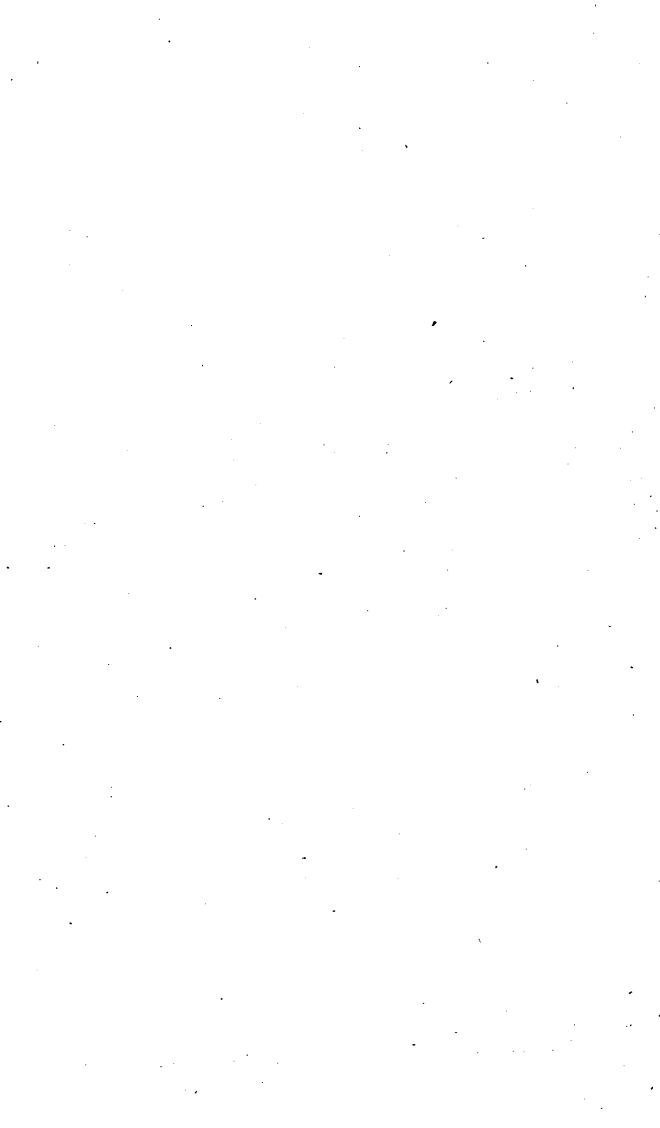
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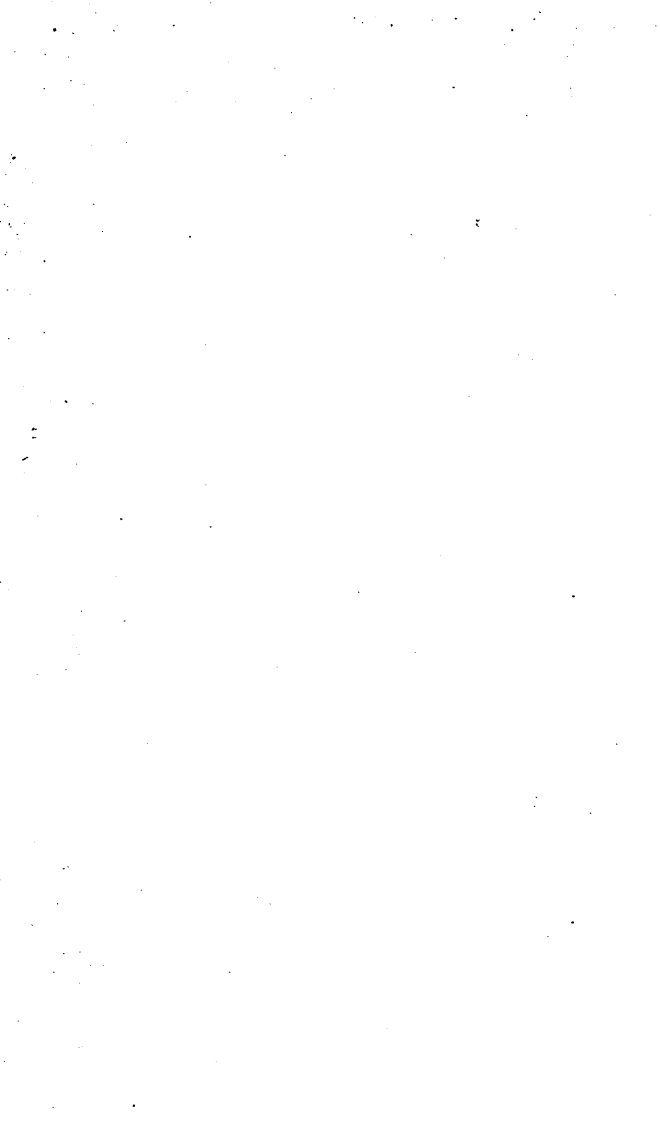
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